

Sight & Sound

The Film Monthly

May

1/6



CAGNEY and THE MOB by Ken Tynan
Michael Powell, Nicole Vedres, Catherine de la Roche,
Ernest Lindgren, Antony Hopkins

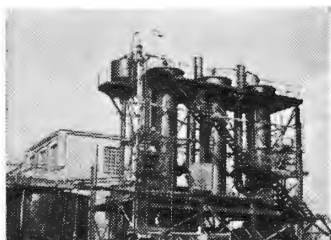
FILMS *of an Industry*

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Sight & Sound

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LONDON FILMS for *Tales of Hoffmann*, *Unwanted Women*

CROWN FILM UNIT for *Fires were Started*, *London can Take it*, *Diary for Timothy*, *Listen to Britain*.

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SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Brief Pointers to the principal films showing in British cinemas during May. Last-minute changes of programme after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies (chiefly in the London area) but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide. Films with an asterisk are particularly recommended.

AMOUREUX SONT SEULES AU MONDE, LES (*Studio One*). The marriage of a middle-aged composer threatened by a pretty young pianist: concerto novelette with style. (Louis Jouvet, Renée Devillers: director, Henri Decoin.)

AS OTHERS SEE US (*LES CASSE-PIEDS*) (*Blue Ribbon*). Extended Benchley style film lecture, anatomizing bores. Fair. (With and by Noel-Noel.)

BORN YESTERDAY (*Columbia*). Judy Holliday brilliant in quite entertaining transcription of Garson Kanin's comedy about the democratic education of a dumb blonde. (William Holden, Broderick Crawford: director, George Cukor.)

BROWNING VERSION (*G.F.D.*). Conscientious adaption of Rattigan's study of a derelict school-master, with an improbable near-happy ending: sentiment with dignity. (Michael Redgrave, Jean Kent, Nigel Patrick: director, Anthony Asquith.)

CAPTAIN HORATIO HORNBLOWER, R.N. (*Warners*). The adventures of C. S. Forester's famous hero pursued at considerable length; naval battles, Technicolor, simple spectacle. (Gregory Peck, Virginia Mayo, Robert Beatty: director, Jacques Tourneur.)

CAUSE FOR ALARM (*M.G.M.*). Thriller about a wife's efforts to recover a letter in which her dying husband has accused her of his murder. Some tension, and a good hysterical performance from Loretta Young. (Barry Sullivan, Bruce Cowling: director, Tay Garnett.)

CESAR (*G.C.T.*). With this, the third part of Pagnol's robust, loquacious trilogy of Marseilles life, the adventures of *Marius* and *Fanny* conclude in marriage. (Raimu, Fresnay, Oriane Demazis: director, Marcel Pagnol, 1936.)

***CINDERELLA** (*R.K.O.*). The first full-length Disney fairy-tale for some time: charming animal characters, a teen-age heroine and prince, and on the whole very enjoyable.

CLOCHEMERLE (*United Artists*). Energetic but rather indifferent French comedy of village life. (Felix Oudart, Brochard: director, Pierre Chenal.)

DARK CITY (*Paramount*). Jaded thriller, with sub-Chandler atmosphere, about a gambler who reforms. (Charlton Heston, Viveca Lindfors, Elizabeth Scott: director, William Dieterle.)

***DROLE DE DRAME** (*Film Traders*). Marcel Carné's second film (1937), scripted by Prevert, a delightful and inconsequent burlesque of Edwardian England, with Scotland Yard unravelling a preposterous murder mystery. (Michel Simon, Louis Jouvet, Francoise Rosay, Jean-Louis Barrault.)

FATHER'S LITTLE DIVIDEND (*M.G.M.*). Sequel to *Father of the Bride*: Spencer Tracy resigns himself reluctantly to becoming a grandfather. Thin material, excessive sentiment, accomplished performances from Tracy and Joan Bennett. (Elizabeth Taylor: director, Vincente Minnelli.)

FOLLOW THE SUN (*Fox*). Idealised biography of American champion golfer Ben Hogan: scenes on the golf course interspersed with sentimentally handled family life. (Glenn Ford, Anne Baxter: director, Sidney Lanfield.)

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA (*Fox*). Milestone's tribute to the Marines in World War Two. Some fine battle scenes and good acting, but the whole compromised by a Jingoistic-cum-sentimental approach to war. (Richard Widmark, Jack Palance, Reginald Gardiner.)

JEALOUSY (*Columbia*). Domestic comedy: idle millionaire husband is jealous of busy doctor wife, but justifies himself by building a hospital. Not very funny. (Larry Parks, Barbara Hale: director, Edward Buzzell.)

JENNIE (*British Lion*). Young artist falls in love with ghost of a dead girl, paints her portrait and makes his name. Very pretentious and whimsical dialogue; full of technical tricks and cosmic references. (Joseph Cotten, Jennifer Jones, Ethel Barrymore: director, William Dieterle.)

LEMON DROP KID, THE (*Paramount*). Medium Bob Hope comedy, based on a Damon Runyon story, (Marilyn Maxwell: director, Sidney Lanfield.)

LIGHTS OUT (*G.F.D.*). A vulgar cash-in on the racial and rehabilitation cycles: blinded veteran readjusts, learns to love Negroes, finds girl, etc. (Arthur Kennedy, Peggy Dow: director, Mark Robson.)

MAD WEDNESDAY (*R.K.O.*). Erratic, sometimes very amusing, Preston Sturges comedy that marks the return of Harold Lloyd.

MA POMME (*Films de France*). Maurice Chevalier comedy about a tramp who inherits a fortune which he doesn't want. Slight, and quite pleasant. (Sophie Desmarets: director, Marc-Gilbert Sauvajon.)

NAKED HEART, The (*British Lion*). Protracted and chilly love story set in a snowy Canadian town: difficult to take seriously. (Michele Morgan, Francoise Rosay, Kieron Moore: director, Marc Allegret.)

NIGHT WITHOUT STARS (*G.F.D.*). Semi-blind lawyer and mysterious widow involved with black marketeers in South of France. Almost unendurable. (David Farrar, Nadia Gray: director, Anthony Pelissier.)

PAGAN LOVE SONG (*M.G.M.*). Simple-minded, rather plotless musical in beautiful colour: romance for schoolmaster and local girl on Tahiti. (Esther Williams, Howard Keel: director, Robert Alton.)

***RONDE, LA** (*G.C.T.*). Maz Ophuls' study of the pursuit of love in the Vienna of 1900; clever, amusing, very stylish, and expertly played, it yet falls just short of a masterpiece. (Danielle Darrieux, Anton Walbrook, Gerard Philipe, Simone Simon, Jean-Louis Barrault.)

TALES OF HOFFMANN (*British Lion*). A Powell-Pressburger experiment in simultaneous opera and ballet: some fine effects, but a misfire. (Moira Shearer, Robert Helpmann, Frederick Ashton.)

TEA FOR TWO (*Warners*). The charming Doris Day, a talented new dancer, Gene Nelson, and tentative 20's flashbacks in a generally average musical. (Gordon MacRae: director, David Butler.)

***TERESA** (*M.G.M.*). Fred Zinnemann's new film is a sensitive, absorbing, sometimes touching story about an emotionally adolescent G.I. who marries an Italian girl, and his mother's attempts to wreck the marriage. The solution, though, is artificially done. (John Ericson, Pier Angeli, Patricia Collinge.)

THIS IS MY AFFAIR (*Fox*). Magazine-type story about the schemes, ruthlessness and final regeneration of an ambitious, glamorous dress designer. (Susan Hayward, Dan Dailey, George Sanders: director, Michael Gordon.)

TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS (*Renown*). New screen version of famous novel. Bullying, sentiment, the reforms of Dr. Arnold, some boisterous schoolboy scenes, all quite competently if unadventurously done. (Robert Newton, John Howard Davies: director, Gordon Parry.)

TRAVELLERS JOY (*G.F.D.*). Mildly amusing, rather dated, comedy of British tourists in currency difficulties abroad. (Googie Withers, John McCallum, Yolande Donlan: director, Ralph Thomas.)

***UNWANTED WOMEN** (*DONNE SENZA NOME*) (*British Lion*). Uneven but gripping and finely acted account of a prison camp for displaced stateless women on the Italian-Yugoslav border. (Valentina Cortese, Simone Simon, Francoise Rosay: director, Geza Radvanyi.)

***WALK IN THE SUN, A** (*Eros*). Made in 1945, a kind of sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, this is an account of a group of American soldiers on an Italian beach-head, and a masterpiece. (Dana Andrews, Richard Conte, Lloyd Bridges, John Ireland: director, Lewis Milestone.)

WEDDING BELLS (*M.G.M.*). Strange adventures of an American theatrical company in London during the royal wedding: a disappointing musical cheered by some wild interpretations of English life and a couple of Astaire dances. (Jane Powell, Sarah Churchill: director, Stanley Donen.)

YOU'RE IN THE NAVY NOW (*Fox*). Leisurely, routine comedy about an inexperienced crew and captain assigned to an experimental naval craft. (Gary Cooper, Jane Greer: director, Henry Hathaway.)

The Front Page

Trial by Television

ONE OF THE MOST fascinating developments in public entertainment in recent months has been the televising of proceedings of Senator Kefauver's Committee during its investigation of American underworld connections. *Entertainment*, not instruction. The vast audience who reputedly left meals uncooked, shopping undone, offices unattended, were clearly interested in seeing a first-rate show. This it must have been: the parade of witnesses featured as stars New York's ex-Mayor William O'Dwyer, the acclaimed underworld ruler Frank Costello (at first only his hands, since he protested against the cameras), and the girl friend of the gangsters, Virginia Hill, who satisfied expectations by hitting a woman reporter. Court scenes, it is always said, never go wrong, and in showing this one television exceeded anything ever attempted by the more discreet and selective movie camera.

If television does move into the cinemas, it will surely be through the showing of events of such public interest: the Kefauver hearings give us a chance to decide now whether this is something to encourage. A case can be made for showing the United Nations in session. Can it be made for presenting a serious investigation (comparable, perhaps, to the Lynskey tribunal hearings in this country) on the level of public entertainment? We can imagine a scene in which witnesses will play to the cameras, in which the camera-shy innocent may appear guilty, in which officials may play to this vast gallery rather than getting on with the job in hand. The world to-day is saturated with the means of mass communication—press, radio, cinema and now television; the proportion of life lived at second-hand is enormous. If big screen television comes about in the near future, the notion of thousands of people sitting in cinemas, in passive judgment on actual instead of fabricated events, cannot but offer an appalling prospect. Fortunately hearings of such absorbing general interest as this happen seldom. At the same time there is clearly a trend to show the public more and more of such proceedings. It is one which will be watched with some apprehension.

Val Lewton

The death of Val Lewton at the age of 46 left him in mid-career: this little known Hollywood producer, of Russian origin, had established an honourable record of "B" pictures remarkable for style, enterprise, and the use of fresh talent. At R.K.O. from 1942-48, Lewton experimented with the tastefully macabre—his first production, *Cat People*, attracted notice, and it contains some of the most eerie sequences in any film. His subsequent productions gave Robert Wise and Mark Robson their first chance as directors—the former with *The Body Snatcher*, a version of the Stevenson story mounted with a real period flavour, and of *Mademoiselle Fifi*, with Simone Simon, never seen in this country. This film, well reviewed in America, combined two Maupassant stories—the title one and "Boule de Suif." Nor have Mark Robson's three films for Lewton been shown over here—*Youth Runs Wild*, an account of teenage Americans which earned its producer a profile in "Time", *Bedlam*, a film about a lunatic asylum, which had a feature in "Life" with some interestingly terrifying stills, and *Isle of the Dead*, another essay in the macabre. Last year Lewton moved to M.G.M., where he produced only one insignificant comedy, *Please Believe Me*, before his death.

Visitors to London

The arrival of several distinguished film-makers and actors from abroad to make films in this country brings a pleasing international flavour to the British cinema at present. John Huston is here to make a C. S. Forester story, *The African Queen*, with Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart; Bette Davis and Garry Merrill are the stars of a British melodrama, *Another Man's Poison*; and two highly talented players from Europe, Valentina Cortese and Serge Reggiani, are now at Ealing Studios under the direction of Thorold Dickinson, in his new film *The Secret People*. Articles on these personalities will appear in forthcoming issues of SIGHT AND SOUND.

Movie Crazy

PEOPLE KEEP TELLING me that the evil-small-town film is dying; and in case the reports are correct, a few obsequies may not be out of place, for it has been a good vogue. It usefully emphasised a great many things which Hollywood had previously glossed over—the necessity for minute direction of crowd rehearsals, the importance of carefully recorded background noise to give a scene a third dimension, and the need for imperturbable phlegm in actors. The obverse effect was that many of the flamboyant personality actors of the thirties have been finding themselves workless; nobody nowadays would give us a *My Man Godfrey* without making it seedy in deep focus. But the triumphs are there: *Fury* was a forerunner, and Lang hit on the right small-town theme—a growling mob and an unwanted intruder. *Strange Incident* was another early one, beginning and ending with the same beatifically peaceful shot of a dog loping across a deserted street. Siodmak's *Spiral Staircase* used the small-town style in its classic opening: the camera's blithe track down the dusty, sunny main street, its discreet entrance into a busy little hotel where the new bioscope is being demonstrated, and its sudden cut to the first-floor room where a crippled girl is being strangled. The juxtaposition of normal and abnormal was perfectly timed.

Then there was Kazan's *Boomerang* to establish the style among cineasts. Corruption in sleazy Anyville; a viciously discarded cigarette butt in an alley while the jukebox roars; snatches of cryptic and irrelevant talk between kerbside passers-by as the bristling killer fingers a spanner; tired, sweating public prosecutors in hot courtrooms; staring close-ups of unmade-up blondes discovering bodies; cut to dapper, time-wasting hotel clerks and urchins playing softball; sadly winking neon signs, rain on vacant lots in the small hours; laconic cab drivers in hamburger stands; the splash of a corpse into a puddle; and back to the jukebox and soft drinks before the slow track along Main Street which ends the picture. *Shadow of a Doubt* was Hitchcock's contribution; *The Stranger* was Welles': the mightiest have paid token homage. The race films came through with a winner in *Intruder in the Dust*; *The Set-Up* exploited the callousness of the fight game in the sticks; Warners continued their veil-tearing orgy with *Storm Warning*; Rossen, picking his moment, blew the small-town film up into an Academy Award winner with *All the King's Men*. From then onwards abnormality was at large behind every white wicket fence, and Hollywood gave us a lot of fine sociological shudders. We shall miss these inbred little towns, where the sun parches by day and the rain makes the streets shine by night.

Many of the series were prefaced by slowly unfolding scrolls to the effect that "the events and people shown in this picture are in no way characteristic of American small towns". It seems ironic that most of the best films Hollywood has made in the last decade should be so entirely unrepresentative of the American way of life.

*

Most of those who saw Luis Bunuel's *Los Olvidados* (The Lost Ones) at the New London Film Society last month will be wanting to forget it, and finding it impossible. This is

Bunuel's comment on juvenile delinquency, shot last year in Mexico; in it he abandons the scabrous formulae of *Le Chien Andalou* and returns to the impassive style of *Land Without Bread*. I have seen nothing more devastating on the screen. This is a deeply-lined, almost a scarred, movie; it is meant to hurt and, unlike most sociological films, doesn't alternately prick and flatter its audience. With both camera and script Bunuel wields a cat-o'-nine-tails.

His subject is a vagrant gang of backstreet Mexican children. One has been deliberately deserted by his penniless family in a crowded market; another is tied to a dwarfish, furiously sentimental drunk of a father; another is fatherless and unwelcome in his jam-packed home—they are leaderless until, lounging through the infested ashcans and unfinished girder-skeletons which are their background, Jaibo returns to them from the reform school; a rangy, lean, smouldering youth with a merciless temper. He leads them in a succession of beastly escapades: they uproot a legless man from a trolley on which he propels himself, rob him, toss him like a parcel on the pavement, and shove the trolley downhill. But Jaibo's chief thought is to execute revenge on the boy who has informed on him; and Bunuel's concern is to deal with the effect on the gang of the moment when Jaibo's fury drives him to beat the stool-pigeon to death. The killer himself merely stares, bronzed and thinly arrogant, out of deep, watchful eyes; he is only momentarily appalled. The camera concentrates on the shock sustained by the youngest witness, a boy of perhaps ten.

In a remarkable sequence, shot in slow motion, he dreams that the dead boy is under his bed. A white hen flaps near; his mother rises, in a billowing night-gown, and floats towards him; she and the murderer fight over the entrails of the hen. With no special settings and without a word of dialogue Bunuel creates a blood-freezing impression of guilt; and the link between Jaibo and the boy's mother is tied later, when he sleeps with her. Wrongly accused of the theft of a knife, the boy goes to reform school; the director of the school gives him money to run an errand, Jaibo encounters him and steals it, and the boy betrays him to the police as a murderer. Jaibo takes his customary brutal revenge and finally dies himself, shot in the back by an excitable gendarme.

Bunuel embroiders his main plot with a hundred mordantly observed vignettes; I remember particularly the burly, expostulating blind beggar, who trades openly on the healing powers with which superstition credits the sightless—at one point we see him crooning over a sick woman as he strokes her back with a live pigeon. Then there is the soft, bearded gentleman who approaches the ten-year-old in the street, furtively offering him easy money—by comparison with Bunuel's film, *Dead End* looks as posed and stylised as an advertisement for Doctor Barnado's Homes. *Los Olvidados* offers no solution to the problems it exposes except the basic one: remove poverty. The brief reform school sequences make it quite clear that Bunuel, though respecting the methods of these and similar institutions, regards them as only a temporary preventive: the explanations provided by the school psychiatrist for the boy's irrational behaviour are quite inaccurate.

The photography (mustily low-key) is by Figueroa, and the music by Halffter, a name new to me. There are amazing performances by the youth playing Jaibo, the podgy little witness, his young-old mother, and the gross old mendicant.

KEN TYNAN.



The Red Badge of Courage



With his film of *The Red Badge of Courage*, John Huston fulfils an ambition of many year's standing. For a long time he had wanted to film Stephen Crane's novel about *The Youth*, the gangling recruit in the Union Army of Rappahannock during the Civil War, who in the heat of a Confederate attack panics and flees, struggles with self-degradation when he realises he is a coward, and discovers courage in a bitter conflict the next day.

Much of the film was shot on location at Chico, California, in the Sacramento Valley, where the landscape is said to be very similar to that of the story's original locale, Virginia. Huston rehearsed his principal actors for three weeks before shooting started; first at his own ranch and then in Chico. The rehearsals on location he covered in detail with a 16mm. camera and a still camera, and these pictures, together with the original Brady photographs of the Civil War, formed his background material. Extras were recruited from the town's inhabitants.

Huston has written his own script, from an adaptation by Albert Rand. The producer is Gottfried Reinhardt and the cameraman Hal Rosson, with both of whom he worked also at M.G.M. on *The Asphalt Jungle*. The cast, drawn mainly from little known players, includes Audie Murphy (seen in the preceding full page still, and in the stills above and left) as *The Youth*; Bill Mauldin (the G.I.'s cartoonist) as *The Loud Soldier*; Douglas Dick as *The Lieutenant*, Royal Dano as *The Tattered Soldier*, and John Dierkes as *The Tall Soldier*.



London

1951



David

Commissioned by the Welsh Committee of the Festival of Britain, David was written and directed by Paul Dickson, who made The Undefeated. It recreates the story of a Welsh community over the last fifty years, its atmosphere and flavour, through the life span of one man. David is seen in the present, played by D. R. Griffith (above), and he also appears as a boy and as a young man. On the left is the scene of his wedding: his wife as a young girl is played by Gwenyth Petty, in her first film appearance.

David was shot on location in the town of Ammanford, produced by James Carr for Worldwide Pictures, and has a musical score by the Welsh composer, Grace Williams.



Waters of Time



PRESENTED BY THE Port of London Authority to the Festival of Britain, *Waters of Time* is the first of several sponsored films, widely different in character, to have been press-shown. It is a notable film: it marks the return of Basil Wright, one of the leading figures of the original documentary movement in this country, to a project of real scope, freely conceived with the encouragement of a liberal patron: it revives many of the experiments in style which the narrowed course of British documentary has for some time neglected: and it shows (and communicates) a rich enjoyment of sensuous, expressive photography.

Just over half an hour in length, the film combines a series of impressions, related by mood and association rather than definite structure, of the 69-mile stretch of the Thames under the Port of London Authority, with some straightforward episodes of shipping operations and daily routine—the turn-round of a cargo boat, the loading and unloading of cargoes, the planning of schedules. The sound score, recorded by Ken Cameron, and including natural sound, four strands of narrative and music, was planned from the rough-cut stage, and evolved with care and complexity during the editing period. The more factual scenes are commentated by a dock-master and a docker; the rest, in a poeticised prose, is spoken by James McKechnie and Paul Dehn, the latter responsible

for all the words. The music, by Alan Rawsthorne, has a fine sweep and richness of texture.

To achieve complete success with such an intricate assembly of elements is difficult; and the problem is accentuated by the fact that Reg Hughes' photography is in itself sufficiently eloquent, and the additional burden of words it is made to carry over-weights the effect. Basil Wright (who scripted, directed and edited in collaboration with Bill Launder) brings his observation to territory which ranges from the many aspects of the surface to the eerie formation of fungus in the London Dock wine vault hundreds of feet below it. The camera is appropriately resourceful—harnessed to a crane for one sequence, mounted on a helicopter for panoramic effects, held in some effectively judged long shots, following the rhythm of the waters in tracking shots from the side of a ship. These slender impressions are never formally unified, but proceed by contrast, by repetition and variations of tempo in the different sequences. One would prefer, perhaps, to absorb them at leisure, without the distraction that any emphatic commentary is bound to provide.

The revival of these techniques, nevertheless, is a rare event. *Waters of Time* is one of the few modern documentaries here to raise aesthetic problems, and to affirm the values of craftsmanship allied to a personal sensibility.



the same American cameraman, Arthur J. Ornitz, as for *Kranes Konditori*.

Thirty years ago Carl Dreyer left Denmark for Germany, because he could find no outlet for his talent at home. Astrid Henning-Jensen is working abroad today for the same reason. She is disappointed at the development—or, rather, lack of development—in Danish studios. Since the reduction of entertainments tax, producers seem to be far more interested in safe box-office subjects than in any kind of experiment, and directors have no artistic freedom at the moment. Norway, on the other hand, has no tradition or position as a film nation, and *Kranes Konditori* (produced by Norsk Film A/S) will be its first real attempt at the international market.

FINN SYVERSEN.

ROME

Curzio Malaparte is a writer whose novels have caused a good deal of controversy in Italy, one of them having been placed on the Index. His first film, *Il Cristo Proibito* (The Forbidden Christ) seems likely to have a similar reception. It is the story of Bruno, a prisoner in Russia during the war, who comes back to his native village and learns that his brother, denounced as a traitor by a fellow-villager, was shot by the Germans. Bruno, who believes in individual rather than social justice, determines to take revenge; but the villagers, tired of war and violence, will not tell him who betrayed his brother. A man who many years ago committed a crime then confesses to Bruno that he betrayed his brother. Bruno kills him, and is told by the dying man: "I lied to save you, and you are innocent of my death. One day you'll learn who the real traitor was, but there's nothing more for you to do: I've paid for him too..." When Bruno discovers the real betrayer, the memory of the dead man's words stops him from killing him: himself now horrified at the cycle of violence, he tells his mother—"My hands are covered with innocent blood." "Only tears," she replies, "can wash away blood..."

The cast includes Raf Vallone (above) as Bruno, Elena Varzi, Alain Cuny and Gino Cervi. Malaparte wrote and directed the film, and also composed the musical score. The cameraman is Gabor Pogany, who worked with Radvanyi on *Somewhere in Europe* and *Unwanted Women*.



"Kranes Konditori". Rønnaug Alten and Erik Hell.

PARIS

FOR THE FRENCH FILM industry the year 1951 began in gloom, overshadowed as it was by the stormy parliamentary debate in which violent accusations of careless spending and corrupt dealings were flung at the "Centre Nationale de la Cinematographie". On this occasion the unfortunate affair of the *Alice in Wonderland* picture came up again. It was alleged that about

"*Juliette ou la Clef des Songes*", Marcel Carne's new film, with Gérard Philipe as a young man in prison, who dreams that he escapes and finds himself in a village where everyone has lost his memory

SCANDINAVIA

Bjarne and Astrid Henning-Jensen, the well-known Danish directors of *Ditte Menneskebarn*, are now making films separately in different countries. Recently Astrid Henning-Jensen finished a film in Norway, *Kranes Konditori* (Kranes Candy Shop), based on a novel by Cora Sandel. The film is something like *Brief Encounter*, being a psychological study of a woman in a little Norwegian town who leaves her home and her family for a weekend. She meets a Swedish sailor, they have a few hours of happiness together, and then she returns to her family. *Kranes Konditori* is the first serious film made in Norway for a long time, and certainly the best ever made there. The musical score was written by a woman—three women, in fact, have made a film together.

Astrid Henning-Jensen is now preparing a new film in Norway, based on a short story, *The Escape*, by the novelist Arthur Omre. It will be shot in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, with actors from these three countries, and she will work with



£250,000 was spent on its production (most of it advanced from State sources) while the producer had not even paid in his agreed share of £15,000. As the finished film (whose cast included the English actor Felix Aylmer and, in the title role, Carol Marsh) has proved a complete failure it is not expected to recover even its production cost.

After a heated debate the original motion designed to deprive the "Centre Nationale" of all financial support from the Government was watered down to a symbolic cut of 1,000 francs from a budget amounting to 70 million francs. On the other hand "Unifrance", the state sponsored organisation charged with propaganda for French films abroad, finally had its budget approved after a lengthy period during which its operations were greatly restricted by lack of funds.

Despite the depression caused by the parliamentary debate and, still more, by the rising cost of production, the Paris studios are busy with projects and preparations. It is refreshing to see the variety of subjects under consideration, and the unorthodox way in which some of them are to be treated.

A semi-documentary approach has been tried by the young director Georges Péclet in his war-time story *Casablanca*, which is in its finishing stages. The title does not refer to the North African town, but is the name of the French submarine which in 1943 liberated Corsica. Commandant Herminier, on whose book the script is based, is played by the actor Jean Vilar, but the 48 men of the original crew appear as themselves on the screen.

Louis Jovet appears on the screen in a brilliant role which he played some time ago on the stage: Knock, the eccentric *fin de siècle* doctor. Jules Romains' famous satirical piece, *Le Triomphe de la Médecine*, once made as a silent film, is being adapted for the screen again. Jane Marken and Jean Brochard are to appear with Jovet. It is enterprising of the producer to entrust the direction to Guy Lefranc, a gifted young man who was formerly assistant director to Serge de Poligny on *La Soif des Hommes* and to Robert Bresson on *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*.

Another adaption of a successful stage play will certainly arouse interest. Jean-Paul Sartre has prepared—with Pierre Bost—the script from his political play *Les Mains Sales* (seen in England as *Crime Passionelle*) which will be played by Pierre Brasseur, Daniel Gélin and Wanda Ollivier.

The film rights of Jean Giraudoux's *La Folle de Chaillot* have also been acquired, and Jacques Companeez will be responsible for the screenplay. The picture will be shot in two versions, French and English, and after seeing Martita Hunt play the title part on the London stage the producer has decided to engage her for both versions.

The same company plans to bring to the screen the Georges Simenon novel *La Neige était Sale*, with dialogue by Henri Jeanson. Raymond Rouleau will both direct and play the main part.

Claude Autant-Lara has agreed to direct in Rome a French-Italian co-production called *Stazione Termini*, scripted in collaboration by Jean Aurenche (who wrote *Symphonie Pastorale*) and Cesare Zavattini. Gerard Philipe will play one of the main parts.

Finally, there is good news from Max Ophüls, who has been looking for some time for a good subject. He is scripting at present, together with Natanson (his collaborator on *La Ronde*) three Maupassant stories which will be collected under the title *Le Plaisir*. D'Eaubonne, who received an award at Venice for his sets for *La Ronde*, will also design the sets for this new picture. Shooting is expected to start in May.

FRANCIS KOVAL.

HOLLYWOOD

The Steel Helmet is rather a notable film in several ways; while it uses the Korean war as a background, and got in first with this, it doesn't deal directly with the conflict, but relates a series of experiences intended to typify those of soldiers in every modern war since World War I. Its frankly bombastic, morale-boosting approach has gained a favourable response from both audiences and many critics in the U.S.

War films often require budgets of astronomical figures, but *The Steel Helmet* was made for less than \$200,000. Directed by an enterprising screenwriter, Samuel Fuller, it was shot in sixteen days by the Robert L. Lippert studios. In addition to the two days of outdoor battle scenes which were filmed in the Los Angeles Griffith Park, there were only two indoor studio sets, which of course greatly reduced production costs.

The Steel Helmet is said to be the first feature film in which the director used a television camera to study the scenes in rehearsal. Through the immediacy of a television set, Mr. Fuller was able to judge the scenes much as they would later appear on a motion picture screen, and, in his opinion, the job of the final editing of the film was greatly speeded up and simplified.

A producer who has made a reputation with films of real quality, on a low budget and with intensive rehearsal methods, Stanley Kramer has now signed a new agreement with Columbia Pictures. Kramer's first four pictures—*Home of the Brave*, *Champion*, *The Men* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*—were released through United Artists. By the new deal, he will produce thirty first-feature films over the next five years for Columbia, under conditions of complete freedom. Amongst his plans are *Death of a Salesman* and *The Member of the Wedding*.

"Photoplay", America's foremost fan magazine, awards gold medals each year to film players and films that their readers vote the most enjoyable. The 1950 winners, announced at a glittering Hollywood reception, were John Wayne, for *Sands of Iwo Jima*, and Betty Hutton for *Annie Get Your Gun*; runners-up included Broderick Crawford (*All The King's Men*), Larry Parks (*The Jolson Story*), Gregory Peck (*Twelve O'Clock High*), Ann Blyth (*Our Very Own*), Claudette Colbert (*Three Came Home*) and Joan Crawford (*The Damned Don't Cry*). Most popular films were, in order of voting, *Battleground*, *All The King's Men*, *Twelve O'Clock High*, *Sands of Iwo Jima*, *Lost Boundaries*, *Father of the Bride*, *Adam's Rib*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Our Very Own* and *Cheaper By The Dozen*.

Once in a while members of some race or nationality request Hollywood producers to refrain from using them as stock villains in motion pictures. Recently it was the Red Indians: now a different type of request has been made by the Empire Cat Club of New York, which feels that Hollywood films have made cats appear too often in an unfavourable light on the screen. The Club wrote a letter to the movie companies stating in part: "Cats are constantly being unfavourably presented as malicious, and associated with evil in both film cartoons and comic strips". Film producers were urged to "present the cat as he really is—an intelligent and economically valuable friend of mankind, responsive to kindness, loyal to home and owner, and appreciative of human companionship and care". Tom and Jerry, it seems, are out of touch.

ARTHUR MARBLE.

BRITISH FILMS IN EUROPE

Francis Koval

TIME AFTER TIME, during the post-war years, British film producers made attempts to conquer the vast and profitable American market and so to put British production on a sound financial basis. There is, of course, more than one answer to the question, why in the end most of these efforts did not meet with success. The reason for the attempt in this direction, however, is crystal clear: with production costs at their present level the British market alone is hardly able to yield substantial profits, and in the case of the more expensive pictures it is sometimes not even sufficient to assure the return of the money spent.

In these circumstances two facts seem rather surprising. Firstly, that comparatively little attention is being given in British studios and executive offices to the Continental market at Denham's and Elstree's very doorstep. Secondly, that, despite this attitude of friendly indifference, the prestige of British pictures in most continental countries still stands fairly high, and has indeed been increasing during the last year or two.

In fact, the Western European market which—excluding the countries lying behind the Iron Curtain—accounts for some 21,000 cinemas, is far from being fully explored by British companies. It is not a market easy to assess or to penetrate in one sweeping move. It is divided among a dozen or so countries, each one of them with different import possibilities, quota regulations, licence systems, currency restrictions; each one varying in taste and outlook. More than anything else, restrictive regulations imposed by foreign governments often scare away potential exporters of films, while the prospect of having "frozen money" in a foreign bank does not attract business men. This latter handicap has fortunately lessened during the last two years, and remittances from most European countries are now forthcoming more speedily than before.

To supplement the scanty information available on the business that British films are actually doing on the Continent, I have discussed the matter with the sales managers or managing directors of the principal British companies, with the secretary of the British Film Producers Association, and with the officer in charge of the Film Section at the Board of Trade. Their kind cooperation deserves not only my, but also my readers', gratitude.

So far British producers have used three methods of distributing their films abroad:

- (i) Setting up their own sales organisation (J. Arthur Rank through Eagle Lion).
- (ii) Partnership with a foreign company as practised by Sir Alexander Korda.
- (iii) Outright sale to a foreign company (a less profitable method mostly used by smaller British firms).

None of these methods is in the present circumstances completely satisfactory, but the second seems to have the advantage of ensuring both continuity and reasonable returns without high administrative cost.

In France, where interest in British pictures has been growing steadily since the days of *Brief Encounter*, the restricted number of dubbing licences constitutes the main

handicap for foreign producers. In accordance with the Franco-American agreement of September, 1948, the number of foreign pictures with French sound track shown in any one year must not exceed 186, of which 121 must be American. No wonder that of the remaining 65 dubbing licences this country cannot expect more than, on the average, 20 per annum. This causes bitter resentment both among producers and in official circles, but on the other hand there may be a grain of truth in the remark once made by a Paris journalist, a great supporter of the British cinema: "Our high esteem for your films would probably fall rapidly, were we to see all the average and below-average features which are at present kept out by the limited number of licences".

In some luxury cinemas of Paris and other big cities English pictures are frequently shown in their original version with subtitles, but in the vast majority of European cinemas only films dubbed in the language of the country have a chance of attracting the public. Countries such as France and Italy have a twenty-year old tradition of dubbing all foreign films, which accounts for a high degree of technical perfection seldom seen in pictures post-synchronised in this country. But the synchronising process is comparatively expensive—£3,000 to £4,000 for an average length feature at present—which automatically limits the number of dubbed films to those justifying the risk of such expenditure.

The recent box-office returns of *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore* or *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (called in France *Noblesse Oblige*) proved beyond doubt that the money invested in synchronisation was well spent. As for *The Third Man*, I am assured that it grossed in France £120,000, and about 30 per cent. less in Italy. It is, incidentally, worth remembering that the provision of a French sound-track opens to a picture not only the doors of the French cinemas (over 5,000 at present), but also makes it suitable for showing in most North African towns, in Switzerland, Luxemburg, and in the 1,400 Belgian cinemas.

In Italy there are according to the latest statistics over 8,000 cinemas, but about half of them are too small or too remote to be taken into account for the purpose of foreign film distribution. Although there is no numerical limitation with regard to the import of foreign films, the Film Bill of July, 1949, introduced a compulsory levy on all foreign films dubbed in Italian, providing a fund destined to aid Italian production. The amount, which was fixed at 2,500,000 Lire (approximately £1,400) per film, takes the form of a loan repayable after ten years.

Even so, in recent years, British films have not done too badly in the Italian cinemas. The number of British units taking advantage of their companies' "frozen money" for location scenes shot in sunbathed Italian settings is an eloquent proof of this.

Among those concerned with the sales of British pictures, however, the opinion prevails that the value of the German market is superior to that of either the Italian or the French. This may be due to the fact that for more than a decade the German public was cut off from British production, and among the backlog of pictures never shown during the Nazi

regime there are a number of impressive films which do not seem to date. Even reissues like *The Thief of Bagdad*, *Elephant Boy* or *The Private Life of Henry VIII* have proved to be first class attractions. There also seems to be unlimited scope there for adaptations from famous novels, such as *Great Expectations* or *The History of Mr. Polly*. And as for *The Third Man* it has beaten all records, as in so many other countries.

Be that as it may, statistics show that the 3,500 cinemas of the three Western Zones of Germany yield for an average box office success sums in the region of 3,000,000 D. Mark, and that the estimated renters' remittances for the sixteen months ending 31st October, 1949, totalled 160,000,000 D. Mark, of which 74 million was for imported productions. This indeed is a language that producers and distributors all over the world best understand.

Many of them do not hesitate to disclose figures concerning the overseas exploitation of their successful pictures. It is reassuring to learn that unpretentious entertainment films like *Temptation Harbour*, *Piccadilly Incident* and *I Live in Grosvenor Square* have all brought in from abroad sums exceeding £100,000.

This includes, besides the countries already mentioned, such smaller but highly developed markets as those of the Scandinavian countries (where British films are particularly popular) or Holland, which has a unique legislation: a quota for the exhibition of pictures produced in Western Europe.

In spite of the prestige that British pictures now enjoy in most European countries, the concrete results achieved are far from being so satisfactory as to justify complacency.

Apart from Western Germany, where they occupy about 20 per cent. of the total screen time, British films have not yet become an important factor in the framework of the day-to-day cinema programmes of most European countries.

In Belgium, for instance, the estimated proportion is 5 per cent. of British films as compared with 72 per cent. American. As for France, the figures for the fairly representative year 1947 indicate that 175 American pictures were shown in Paris, against only 22 British. During the same year in Italy, Hollywood was represented by 290 films, and British studios by 40—by 10 more films, incidentally, than France.

Recently, it has been possible to detect in British studios a little more concern for the presumed tastes of the Continental public, and this effort has certainly paid dividends during the

last year or two. In connection with this encouraging change of attitude, it may be as well to remember certain relevant facts. In considering the appreciation of British films in countries such as France, Belgium or Italy, one must draw a clear dividing line between that relatively small class of cinema-conscious people whose judgment is backed by a certain standard of education, and the broad mass of average picture-goers, especially those outside the big towns.

The first British post-war picture that really impressed people in these countries was *The Seventh Veil*, and this already was more popular with the first group than with the second. The same reaction was produced, in a much more striking way, by *Brief Encounter*. While in intellectual Paris everyone was very enthusiastic about this admirable picture (and still is, incidentally), the average small-town Frenchman shook his head and mumbled: "Not a bad picture, but what a lot of fuss these English make about a little love affair. . ."

On the other hand, a film like *The Third Man* has doubtless had an enthusiastic reception in both milieux. A French friend of mine who saw the original version in London without knowing any English summed up his impression by saying: "Splendid! I could not understand a word of the dialogue, but nothing escaped me".

In fact with this remark, which was not intended to be ironic, he gave me an important clue: action which is so cinematic that it can be easily understood even without the help of the sound-track is one of the main elements which will make a film successful outside its country of origin. Once this principle is observed, even the supposedly untranslatable English humour can be caught by the camera, and will make foreign audiences respond. We had the best proof of this last year when *Whisky Galore* and *Passport to Pimlico* each became overnight the talk of Paris, and highbrows and lowbrows unanimously asked: "Why on earth haven't the British shown us their humour on the screen before?"

People on the Continent show at present a certain boredom with American pictures. They have begun to object to the unvarying repetition of certain themes, the over-emphasis on crime and glamour, even to the relentlessly smooth technique so characteristic of the average Hollywood product. In these circumstances there is no greater error than for a British film to try to copy this American "perfection". This applies to their native audience reaction as well.



The Seventh Art



Samson and Delilah, who have already won a wide reputation for the late John Milton and for the seventeenth century Bishops who translated their tale into English, at last received the supreme accolade for their movie of the same name. They got the awards for the best art direction and the best costume designs. (Alistair Cooke, *Manchester Guardian*.)



It (*The Steel Helmet*) is, I think, a much better film than *All Quiet on the Western Front* for the reason that it is more objective and therefore a better record—therefore a better piece of propaganda. (Film review in *Focus*, organ of the Catholic Film Institute.)



Doris Day. . . has given her reactions to being chosen in a recent poll by the magazine *Life* as one of 12 people American school children had "read about or heard about that they would most like to resemble". Doris, who was placed fourth, confesses that she is amazed. "Do you know that in a similar poll taken fifty years ago fourth place was occupied by Julius Caesar?" she asks. (*Publicity Handout*.)

Flame, a fifth generation descendant of Strongheart, once famous film dog, has been engaged by Universal-International to play Dick Powell in a previous incarnation in *One Never Knows*. (*Publicity Handout*.)

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(American Cinema Advertisement)

CAGNEY AND THE MOB

Ken Tynan

TWENTY-ONE YEARS ago James Cagney, playing in his first film, invented a new kind of screen character. In more than fifty subsequent appearances he has polished and complicated it, but the type has remained substantially unchanged; and it may now be time to investigate its extraordinary influence. Morally and psychologically it could be maintained that the Cagney code and manners have come to dominate a whole tradition of American melodrama.

Before Cagney boffed Mae Clark with a grapefruit in *Public Enemy*, Hollywood had adhered to what was, by general consent, a reasonably stringent set of moral principles. The film is no exception to the other popular narrative arts: in its infancy it clings to a broad and exaggerated ethical system, based on pure blacks and whites. In the theatre this period is represented by the morality play, and was superseded by Marlowe, whose heroes were noble and wicked, fraudulent and pious, cruel and idealistic, at the same time. In the novel the period of over-simplification ended with the Romantics; and in the film it ended with Cagney.

This is not to say that the American movie before 1930 was never immoral: the very urgency of the need for a Hays Office demonstrates the contrary. But its immorality, however blatant, was always incidental and subordinate: a sheikh might flay his wives with scorpions to enliven the curious, but he would be sure to be trampled on, baked or impaled in the last reel. He was always transparently evil, and the flayee transparently innocent. In the early Westerns there is no doubt who is the villain; he is the man leaning against the bar in black frock-coat, ribbon bow-tie and pencilled moustache. He is a killer, charmless and unfunny, and suffers dreadfully by comparison with the bronzed hero on the white horse; his part, too, is much shorter than the star's. In the twenties there was not only a rigid distinction between the good characters and the bad; they were also evenly balanced in numbers and fame. Vice and virtue proclaimed themselves irrevocably within the first hundred feet, or the director was failing at his job.

Cagney changed all this. In *Public Enemy* he presented, for the first time, a hero who was callous and evil, while being simultaneously equipped with charm, courage and a sense of fun. Even more significantly, he was co-starred not with the grave young district attorney who would finally ensnare him, but with a bright, callow moll for him to slap. The result was that in one stroke Cagney abolished both the convention of the pure hero and that of approximately numerical equipoise between vice and virtue. The full impact of this minor revolution was manifested at last in the 1942-47 period, when Ladd, Widmark, Duryea and Bogart were able to cash in on Cagney's strenuous pioneering. It now becomes fascinating to trace the stages of development by which the Cagney villain (lover, brute, humorist and killer) was translated into the Bogart hero (lover, brute, humorist, but non-killer). It is an involved story.

Probably it begins with the physical attributes of Cagney himself. One finds it hard to take such a small man seriously: how, after all, can a playful redhead of 5 ft. 8 ins. really be a

baron of vice? It is safe to say that if Cagney had been four inches taller, his popularity would be fathoms less than it is. Villains before him had tended to be huge: they loomed and slobbered, bellowed and shambled: you could see them coming. Cagney was and is spruce, dapper and grinning: when he hits a friend over the ear with a revolver-butt, he does it as casually as he will presently press the elevator button on his way out. By retaining his brisk little smile throughout he makes one react warmly, with a grin, not coldly and aghast. Nobody in 1930, the year after Chicago's St. Valentine's Day massacre, at which Capone's lieutenants slaughtered nine men in a disused garage, would have tolerated any romanticisation of the gangster legend. When Muni played *Scarface* for Howard Hawks two years later, he presented the mob leader as an unhealthy, ungainly lout, a conception clearly in key with contemporary taste. Cagney unconsciously paved the way for the advent of the smooth, romantic gangster of the late 'thirties; he softened public opinion by sneaking up on it through a forgotten and unguarded loophole. He was never a romantic figure himself—at his height you can't be—nor was he sentimental—Cheshire cats never are—but he possessed, possibly in greater abundance than any other name star of the time, irresistible charm. It was a cocky, picaresque charm; the charm of pert urchins; the gaminerie of unlicked juvenile delinquents. Cagney, even with sub-machine gun hot in hand and corpses piling at his ankles, can still persuade many people that it was not his fault. By such means he made gang law acceptable to the screen, and became by accident one of the most genuinely corrupting influences Hollywood has ever sent us. Cagney brought organised crime within the mental horizon of errand-boys, who saw him as a cavalier of the gutters—their stocky patron saint.

But before the actor comes the script. What literary circumstances were conspiring to produce a climate in which the brutal hero could flourish? It would be superficial to neglect Hemingway, who was beginning to project on to the American mind his own ideal of manhood—a noble savage, idly smoking, silhouetted against a background of dead illusions. Surveyed impartially, the Hemingway hero numbers among his principal characteristics that of extreme dumbness: he is the sincere fool who walks phlegmatically off the end of the pier. He is honourable, charmless, tough and laconic; and he is always, in some sense, a pirate or an adventurer. What Cagney did was to extract the moral core from Hemingway's creation and put smartness in its place: the result was a character charmingly dishonourable, but saved from suavity or smugness by his brute energy and swift, impetuous speech. Perhaps the simplest point of departure is that, whereas the Hemingway man never hits a woman for fun, Cagney made a secure living out of doing just that.

The success of Cagney's methods made all sorts of variations possible; chief among them the *genre* popularised in the novels and films of Chandler. Here the central character is tough, cynically courageous, and predisposed towards brutality; he is in fact identical with the Cagney version in all save one vital respect—he is on the side of the law. The process is thus



Cagney

The Mob

completed: the problem of how to retain the glamour of the killer without the moral obloquy of murder has been solved. Let your hero be a private eye, and he can slaughter just as insensitively in the name of self-defence.

Cagney himself has rarely compromised; at the height of his career he never lined up with the police or made any concessions to public morals beyond the token one of allowing himself to be killed at the end, as an indispensable but tiresome rubric. At his best (*Public Enemy*, *The Mayor of Hell*, *The G-Men*, *White Heat*) he flouts every standard of social behaviour with a disarming Irish pungency which makes murder look like an athletic exercise of high spirits and not a mean and easy transgression. He sweetened killing; and to have done this immediately after the Capone regime, during the era of the concentration camp and between two lacerating wars, is something of an achievement.

He was born in New York in 1904 and educated at Stuyvesant High School and Columbia University; his background was East Side, but not the slum and tenement area. He began his stage career, mysteriously, as a female impersonator in 1923, and thereafter for six years danced and understudied in vaudeville. He was mostly penniless. In 1929 William Keighley, then a Broadway director, saw Cagney and Joan Blondell in a romp called *Maggie the Magnificent* and starred them in *Penny Arcade*; the play was bought for First National and all three went to Hollywood with it. Retitled *Sinners' Holiday* it was released in 1930. Cagney made eight pictures with Joan Blondell in less than four years, and she proved a perfect punchbag for his clenched, explosive talent; the best of the series, *Steel Highway*, started a revealing vogue for stories about men who work in dangerous proximity to high tension electrical mechanisms. These films came to be known as "death-dicers", since they invariably centred on a character who was only happy close to sudden death, who enjoyed tightrope along telegraph wires or lighting cigarettes around kegs of dynamite. For such parts Cagney was a natural, and Wellman, who directed *Steel Highway*, quickly exploited the new star's edgy gameness by putting him into *Public Enemy*,

with Blondell and Mae Clark. When the film appeared in 1931, the age of the screen gangster had officially begun. Howard Hawks followed in 1932 with *Scarface*, which, though it had the advantage of one of Ben Hecht's best scripts, lacked Cagney's spearhead precision to hold it together. For ten years afterwards he led the gangster film to extraordinary box-office eminence, and four times appeared in the annual list of the ten top money-making stars. In 1932, Hawks made *The Crowd Roars* with Cagney and Blondell; in 1933 came *The Mayor of Hell*; in 1934 Michael Curtiz' *Jimmy the Gent*; in 1935 Keighley's expert and sombre *The G-Men*; and finally, feeling that things were becoming too easy for him, Warners teamed Cagney with Bogart in *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938) and *The Roaring Twenties* (1939). At this point he had made thirty-two films in nine years; the association with Blondell had dissolved, and his most frequent sparring partner was Pat O'Brien.

Cagney was now maturely at his best. Even the most ascetic cineast will admit that it is impossible to forget how he looked and talked at the height of his popularity. The spring-heeled walk, poised forward on the toes; the fists clenched, the arms loosely swinging; the keen, roving eyes; the upper lip curling back in defiance and derision; the rich, high-pitched, hectoring voice; the stubby, stabbing index finger; the smug purr with

Girl gets grapefruit: Mae Clarke and James Cagney in "The Public Enemy"





Two studies: Cagney in the studio restaurant, c.1933, and in the ecstasy of destruction in "White Heat", 1949

which he accepts female attention—Cagney's women always had to duck under his guard before he would permit them to make love to him. He was practically unkillable; it would generally take a dozen Thompson guns and a bomb or two to bring him to his knees; and he would always die running at, not away from, his pursuers, in a spluttering, staggering zig-zag, ending with a solid and satisfying thump. He moved more gracefully than any other actor in Hollywood. And he had a beguiling capacity for reassuring while he murdered: he would wrinkle up his face into a chubby mask of sympathy and then let you have it in the stomach. His relaxedness, even when springing, was absolute; he released his compact energy quite without effort. When circumstances forced him to shout, his face would register how distasteful he found it.

Cagney's first rival in the game of romantic murder appeared in 1936. Humphrey Bogart, five years Cagney's senior, had made half a dozen mediocre pictures since 1932, and had returned to the stage to play the escaping gangster, Duke Mantee, in *The Petrified Forest*. In 1936 the play was filmed and Bogart was established. It was a new style; speculative, sardonic, sourly lisping, he stood out in direct contrast to Cagney, who was agile, clean-cut, and totally unreflective. Bogart frequently appeared unshaven; Cagney, never; but the challenge was clear, for both men specialised in whimsical law-breaking and both commanded alarming sex-appeal. Cagney, who had captured several million infant hearts with pictures like *Here Comes the Navy*, *Devil Dogs of the Air*, and Howard Hawks' *Ceiling Zero* had access to an audience to which Bogart never appealed; but Bogart split Cagney's female admirers, and was usually featured with bigger stars and better directors than Warners could offer Cagney. *Bullets or Ballots* (1936) followed *The Petrified Forest*; in 1937, following a brief and unsuccessful venture into legality as the D.A. in *Marked Woman*, he made *San Quentin* and *Kid Galahad*; and he breasted the year with his superbly metallic playing of Baby-Face Morgan in Wyler's *Dead End*. He had added to the gangster film something which Cagney always avoided: the dimension of squalor. In Cagney's looting there had been an atmosphere, almost, of knight-errantry; Bogart, tired, creased and gnarled, effectively debunked it. The two films they made together for Warners made an absorbing conflict of styles—with Cagney throwing his hard, screwing punches and Bogart lazily ducking them. Cagney's was the

more accomplished exhibition of ringcraft, but Bogart's sewage snarl won him the decision. At times both men found themselves using the same tricks; each had perfected his own version of the fanged killer's smile, and a good deal of *The Roaring Twenties* developed into a sort of grinning contest.

The experience must have proved something to both Cagney and Warners, because he made no more gangster films for ten years: by then the war had begun, the mob was very small beer, and the echo of machine-guns across deserted lots had lost its fascination for movie audiences. Bogart graduated to the side of justice, and the second important change in the history of filmed mayhem had taken place. In 1941 he played Sam Spade for Huston in *The Maltese Falcon*—still the same wry brute, but more insidiously immoral, since now there was a righteous justification for his savagery. He repeated this performance in *Across the Pacific*, and when *The Big Sleep* appeared in 1945 it looked as if the pure gangster film was dead. In 1942, Paramount produced their answer to Bogart in *This Gun for Hire*: the soft and silky thuggishness of Alan Ladd; and Dick Powell entered what was by now a very competitive market with *Farewell My Lovely* (1944) and *Cornered* (1945). Screen melodrama in this period was filled with ageing bandits, battering their way to glory under police protection. Meanwhile Cagney had not been idle, though

Cagney Meets Bogart (1) "Angels with Dirty Faces". Cagney Meets Bogart (2) "The Roaring Twenties"





Corrupter of youth? James Cagney with the Dead End Kids in "Angels with Dirty Faces"

films like *The Strawberry Blonde*, *Captains of the Clouds* and *The Bride Came C.O.D.* (in which he daintily plucked cactus needles from Bette Davis' seat) were not materially helping his reputation. In 1942, Curtiz made *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, a masterpiece of heartfelt hokum, and Cagney won an Academy Award with his sturdy, chirpy pirouetting; but the shamelessness of his early days seemed to have vanished. The woman-slapping outlaws of the forties were the creations of feature players, not of stars, and they were mostly in the hands of Dan Duryea, the impact of whose rancid and lascivious unpleasantness in *The Little Foxes* had been confirmed by his straw-hatted blackmailer in Lang's *Woman in the Window* (1944) and his raucous pimp in *Scarlet Street* (1945). The courage of nastiness had gone.

In 1942, Cagney formed his own production unit with his brother William, and in seven years made only four films—*Johnny Vagabond*, a philosophical failure; *Blood on the Sun*, a commonplace espionage thriller; *13 Rue Madeleine* (for Twentieth Century) a documentary-style spy story; and *The*

Time of Your Life—a shrug of a film, charmingly aimless and inexpensive, in which Cagney, as a talkative drinker, gave his best performance since *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. The critics were suggesting that Cagney had agreed to accept middle-age and abandoned the orgiastic killing of his youth. Then, in 1950, he suddenly returned to Warners and, with Raoul Walsh, made *White Heat*.

The style, in that amazing film, was the man himself: Cagney had never been more characteristic—flamboyant, serio-comic, and tricky as a menagerie. It is not easy to decide why he came back to straight gangster vehicles; though I have the impression that Twentieth Century had much to do with it for, in 1947, they had begun their campaign to sell Richard Widmark to the public. His weedy, snickering murderer in *Kiss of Death* gave an unexpected lease of life to the gangster film. Playing within the semi-documentary convention, he could not be permitted to dominate his films as Cagney had in the lawless thirties; but he had the same gimlet appeal and was tapping the same love of clever violence. By 1949, his popularity was such that it must have persuaded Warners to disturb the retirement of their senior hoodlum.

Walsh and Cagney reverted in *White Heat* to the frankly artificial framework of *Public Enemy*: there were a few location sequences, but the main burden fell on the star's personality. The scenario made a genuflection to contemporary demand by giving its hero a mother-complex: whereat Cagney staggered even his devotees by acting it up to the hilt with a blind conviction which was often terrifying: he never let up. The film dealt with the breakdown of a killer's mind, and his slow, unwitting, unadmitting approach to the long tunnel of insanity. Cagney never indulged in self-pity for a moment: if the script called for a fit, he would throw one, outrageous and full-blooded; and by a miracle his integrity never gave out. The result was a lesson in neurosis which ranks, in recent memory, only with Richard Basehart's in *Fourteen Hours*. One cannot unlearn the sequence in which Cagney, attempting to ward off a mutiny amongst the boys, drives himself into one of his recurring blackouts, and drags himself to the cover of a bedroom, moaning in deep thick sighs like a wounded animal. And above all, the scene in the

The gangster tradition: in Cagney's footsteps. Bogart ("the dimension of squalor") as the private dick, Dan Duryea and the cult of the gutter, Richard Widmark's psychopathic menace, and Alan Ladd in action.





"Winner Take All". In 1932, Cagney as a boxer was punchdrunk in and out of the ring.

prison refectory. Word is passed down the table to Cagney that his mother has been killed: he stops eating, grins spasmodically, murmuring to himself, and then goes berserk, letting out strange, bestial cries and punching, punching at everyone with a compulsive defiance as he scampers the length of the hall. No other actor in Hollywood could have got away with that.

The older, crisper Cagney was there too; even he has never outdone, for sheer casualness, the murder of the stoolpigeon, whom he has locked up in the luggage-trap of his car. "Kinda stuffy in here", the prisoner complains. "Like some air, eh?" says Cagney, cocking a wicked eyebrow; and, stopping only to pop a hot dog in his mouth, fires six shots into him through the body of the car. The climax was nerve-wracking: cornered, he takes refuge in an explosives plant and is chased to the top of a huge circular vat of, presumably, T.N.T. Yelling: "On top of the world, Ma, on top of the world!" he sends his last

bullet into it, and is blown sky-high. It was audacious and incredible in retrospect, but such was the intensity of Cagney's playing that one refused to laugh. It is always unworthy to deride perfect stylists, even if one disapproves of the ends to which the style is being put. There could be no question, in this sequence, that a very remarkable actor had hit his full stride and was carrying his audience with him.

The last Cagney film, *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye*, was completely unsuccessful; spurred by his triumph in *White Heat*, the star tries too hard, and the consequent heap of corpses smothers even his panache. It now appears that he has returned to Warners for good, though probably not to make more than one film a year. *Fine and Dandy*, a musical, will be followed by a comedy called *Come Fill the Cup*. Warners' press department have recently announced that Cagney intends soon to leave the screen and go to classes at Connecticut Agricultural College with his son. Like the surly *bravo* in *The Asphalt Jungle*, he loves farming best.

I do not mean, by all this, to suggest that the crime film deserves over-serious analysis: it has always been openly unreal in structure, depending for its excitement on jazzed dialogue and overstated photography. But its influence on scripting and camera-work has been incalculable, involving many of the most expert and adult intelligences in Hollywood—Hecht, Hawks, Wyler, Toland, Huston, Wellman, Lang, Chandler and Hellinger among them—and it has provided an incomparable outlet for at least one unique acting talent. If it has had a pernicious social influence, that is probably Cagney's fault, and there is no space here to balance the old scales between art and morality. For myself, I do not mind walking the Edgware Road in peril, as long as there is a Cagney picture at Marble Arch. A great deal of desperate urgency and attack would have been lost to the cinema, if the gang film had not arrived, making fantastic technical demands on cameraman and electrician and recording engineer, with Cagney, safe and exulting, at the wheel of a bullet-riddled Cadillac.



Mother's Boy: Cagney and Margaret Wycherley in "White Heat"

Films of the Month

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN Catherine de la Roche



A GIGANTIC PANORAMA of dreamland and nightmare, sometimes rising to enchanted heights, then falling to dismal banality, the new Powell-Pressburger picture, like much of their work, is a baffling, tantalising, but eminently noteworthy piece of perverse brilliance. For the second time they prove what cinema, especially in their hands, can do for ballet: some moments in *The Tales of Hoffmann* surpass the beauty of the best sequences in *Red Shoes*. Their treatment of opera, on the other hand, is an inconclusive, if daring, experiment, indicating as many dangers as possibilities. But it is the choice of subject and the interpretation of Hoffmann's Gothic fantasies that are the most revealing aspects of the venture.

The prologue contains some of the most glorious animated imagery in the film. A shimmering, darting dragonfly dances her life story, the story of her triumph over her mate whom she loves, then kills: the ballerina appears to Hoffmann as the personification of his past loves; he watches her, entranced; in the wings his enemy glowers; at his side his constant muse waits for the new folly to pass. Later, in a tavern, as he sings the Kleinsack ballad about a hunchback's love for a grand lady who mockingly turns her mirror to his ugly face, the heroes emerge from a row of huge beer mugs on the shelf beyond, and mime the narrative of his song. Eyes in close-up, attitudes in silhouette, a flying movement or slight gesture, moments of ecstasy, sadness, scorn, delight—Michael Powell



"The Tales of Hoffmann". Moira Shearer as the Dragonfly in the prologue (Left) Pamela Brown, Frederick Ashton, Moira Shearer, Massine, in *The Doll*

is a past master at isolating them, then cascading the images over the screen in vivid patterns and rhythms.

The interplay of ballet, mime and imagery in the first tale (based on *The Sandman*) is even more successful. Wearing magic spectacles sold to him by the sinister optician Coppélius, the young Hoffmann mistakes Olympia, the puppet-maker Spalanzani's pretty full-size doll, for a living girl and falls in love. They dance in her flimsy world of cellophane and gauze, and away into the boundless realms of fancy; the smaller puppets clap with glee, making a delicate rustling sound; then the malicious Coppélius smashes the doll and with it Hoffmann's illusions. The enchanting ballet, the playful comedy of the puppets, the prolific inventiveness of the design and effects and, above all, the fluidity of the whole movement make this sequence an outstanding piece of cinema.

In the second tale, which takes Hoffmann, now a man of the world, to the decadent Venice of the Doges, the style deteriorates. A few early scenes of abandon and excess at the grotesque orgy seem to promise a touch of irony or caricature. But no. The story of Hoffmann's adventure with the courtesan Giulietta is a ponderous Teutonic version of Latin goings-on, and the allegory of his lost reflection in mirrors when he loses his soul, however photogenic, is tediously over-elaborated. Things get worse when he reaches maturity in the last tale (from *The Story of Krespel*) about Antonia, who is forbidden by her half-demented widowed father to sing because, besides talent, she has inherited consumption from her mother. An evil genius tempts her to disobey, luring her towards a Grecian statue of her mother, whose voice joins in response from the world beyond, and, as Antonia, wandering along a sculptured vista, sings herself to death, an enormous halo illumines the mother's statue. Not only does this outdo Hollywood's excesses in mother-worship, it is not even true to Hoffmann's original, in which the mother is described with some humour as a capricious prima donna, whose tantrums drove her husband from home.

In the process of adaptation, first to libretto and from it to screenplay, the tales have been both bowdlerised and vulgarised, losing certain virtues and retaining certain defects. If the chief qualities of the Serapionic* principle in Hoffmann's writing are *conviction* in imaginary experience and studied

* *Serapiensbruder* is the name Hoffmann gave to a collection of his tales and to a club of his literary friends among whom were several leaders of the early 19th Century German romantic movement.

realism of description, the film's main fault is its failure to create a sustained illusion. Whether any stage production of the libretto has succeeded in this, I do not know, but if it did, this can only have been as a result of perfect mastery of operatic convention. The film conforms to some operatic conventions, while disregarding others, and the result here is that the operatic idiom is at variance with itself and the film idiom. In theory it might seem enthralling to have artists with superhuman hearts and lungs dancing at breathless speed and singing prodigious roulades simultaneously. But, when Moira Shearer swirls through her exquisite waltz as Olympia while miming the lip movements of the "Doll Song" pre-recorded by Dorothy Bond, the performance, instead of appearing magical, looks impossible. Furthermore, several of the dubbed voices are singularly ill-matched to the individualities of the artists to whom they are supposed to belong: the feather-weight figure of Robert Helpmann, who reappears in all the tales as the "hostile principle" in Hoffmann's life, sings with a deep and mighty baritone, too obviously not his own; and Pamela Brown strays in and out of the picture, looking bewildered, as well she might, for she plays the boy Nicklaus, Hoffmann's muse, and "sings" with Monica Sinclair's mezzo-soprano. Inevitably, these incongruities are magnified by the movie camera.

Saturated with German romanticism, the film reflects the Serapionic idea of the artist's special position in life which elevates him to a lofty sphere of his own creation: in the epilogue the hero, finding his vocation as a poet, renounces worldly love in favour of his muse. How "lofty" these private domains, where unreality replaces reality, can become, is suggested by the typical Hoffmann motifs in which the picture also abounds—his taste for the supernatural, his preoccupation with insanity, his gruesome hallucinations. Some of these motifs must have a fascination for the Powell-Pressburger team too, for they have toyed with them, rather pointlessly, in earlier films. Apparently this is the price to be paid for the artistry, the wealth of imagination, and moments of beauty in the best of their productions.

TERESA

FRED ZINNEMANN'S new film is as independent in spirit as his previous ones—*The Search*, *Act of Violence*, *The Men*; he has, indeed, established an integrity of subject and style at an earlier stage than many other Hollywood directors. The material, as one might expect, is topical, and the approach full of human sympathy. The early part of *Teresa*, set in the

village of Scascoli, Italy, is contained in a flashback: the film introduces Philip as a demobilised G.I. back in his New York tenement home, unable to find a job and in a state of acute nervous tension. He remembers his time in Italy. A raw and frightened recruit, he was befriended by the understanding Sergeant Dobbs, whom he hero-worshipped; he met and fell in love with Teresa, a young Italian girl. On a night patrol he panicked, and in the resulting confusion Dobbs was killed. He married Teresa, then returned home while she awaited transportation as a G.I. bride.

Out of flashback, the film sketches in Philip's family background, with particular emphasis on his mother—a woman outwardly kind, reasonable, devoted to her son, but inwardly bitter and possessive, despising her weak husband and jealously resentful of Teresa's arrival. Philip himself is ambivalent in his feelings toward her, and his brooding sense of guilt over Dobbs shows as another side of the same problem—dominated by his mother, he is frightened of discovering himself to be as weak as his father. When Teresa arrives, his mother sets about subtly to alienate the young couple, forced to live in the tenement because of the housing shortage and the fact that Philip is out of work. Under the pressure of his own complexes, aggravated by his mother, Philip reaches breaking point and the marriage cracks up.

This, the first two-thirds of the film, is told with considerable insight and understanding, though on the whole the narrative is stronger in individual scenes than in its general progression. Although in each case the scriptwriters have been different, this is characteristic of Zinnemann's other films, *The Search* and *The Men*: the development is episodic, the structure loose, though many separate points are made forcefully and sharply. Zinnemann excels in dramatising the shifts and tensions of personal relationships, at intimately setting the mood of a scene, but perhaps the too contrived solution to *Teresa* (as in *The Search* and *The Men*) reflects, finally, an indecision in the design of the whole story. The episodes in each of these films build up to a strong and logical climax, which isolates the central figure at a point of desperation: the way, in each case, he is reconciled to life is less convincing. The idea of reconciling Teresa and Philip through the latter's father was a good one, but the treatment of it, in contrast to the rest, is perfunctory. The relation between Philip's problems, too, is not crystallised dramatically but in the jargon of an army psychiatrist whom he goes to see.

These reservations apart, there is much to recommend in *Teresa*. The young couple are attractively, naturally drawn, and played with real freshness. John Ericson, in his first film appearance, looks and acts rather like Marlon Brando, but he has an individual personality. In technique he seems at times immature, but there is no doubt that he is a most promising discovery. Pier Angeli, an 18 year-old Italian girl, has previously been in Moguy's *Tomorrow is Too Late*: she is better handled by Zinnemann, and gives a performance of exceptional charm and feeling. As the mother, Patricia Collinge plays as powerfully and subtly as one might expect—beautifully suggesting the bitter jealousies behind the soft, clinging manner, the inflexible selfishness veiled in fatigue.

Stewart Stern and Alfred Hayes have written many scenes extremely well: Philip's early meeting with Teresa, the scenes with her family (including two players from *Domenica d'Agosto*, Franco Interlenghi and Ave Ninchi), the open air



Picnic on Jones Beach: Richard Bishop, Peggy Ann Garner, Pier Angeli, Patricia Collinge and John Ericson in "Teresa"



"Donne Senza Nome": left, Simone Simon as the French girl; right, a scene after the attempted escape: centre, Valentina Cortese as the Yugoslav, and Gina de la Torre Falkenberg as the ex-Nazi German

wedding, are sensitively described, and in Zinnemann's handling of them his style shows at its best—firm, unobtrusive, with an observation at once exact and sympathetic. The break-up of the marriage is also vividly and painfully shown, particularly in the scene at Jones Beach where, during a family picnic, Philip reaches his *impasse*.

All these scenes are equal to the best in Zinnemann's other films. His talent is in many ways so striking and individual that one hopes in his next film he will be able completely to crystallise it—to strengthen the overall grasp of the subject, to give it a clearer development, and dispense with the occasional falterings and contrivances: and also to use music more sparingly. Here, Lou Applebaum's score is obviously superior to Tiomkin's in *The Men*, but it is still over-indulged.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

DONNE SENZA NOME—

(Unwanted Women)

THIS VIOLENTLY UNEVEN but often remarkable film was made by a Hungarian in Italy, with an international cast; the action, set shortly after the end of World War II, takes place in a prison camp for displaced and stateless women of many nationalities. The central character is a young Yugoslav girl whose lover, involved in underground politics, has been shot. She arrives at the camp, soon discovers she is pregnant, is terrified the baby will be taken away from her and makes plans to escape. The plan goes wrong, and she has her baby in a camp hut, during an entertainment got up by some of the inmates. She dies in childbirth: a prison guard takes pity on the baby, claims to be its father, and promises to look after it. This story is played out in the intervals of other episodes—a Polish girl, shattered by her experiences in a slave brothel for German soldiers on the Eastern front, recognises in the camp the German nurse who sent her there, and the German is set upon and killed; a good-natured little French slut lures a plump, half-cretinous Albanian merchant into marrying her, and so obtains her release; a Nazi's Belgian widow plays cards, stages a performance of "Romeo and Juliet", while waiting for her papers to come through.

Donne Senza Nome is the second film by Geza von Radvanyi to be seen in London. Undoubtedly superior as a whole to *Somewhere in Europe* (retitled *Kuksi* here), it was conceived as the second part of a trilogy exploring the aftermath of war in various parts of Europe. For a number of reasons the film has not emerged as he originally conceived it. Other scriptwriters were called in: improvisation and indecision are evident in the varying quality of the episodes and the ragged structure. The

French girl and the ludicrous Albanian are overdrawn characters—their courtship exists on an incongruous level of caricature. The stylistic experiments—the parallel montage of the Italian girl in labour and the camp entertainment—are sometimes rather strained. As in *Somewhere in Europe*, the occasional intrusion of a technique derived from the Russian silent cinema looks artificial when the general approach has the pace and roughness characteristic of modern realistic films. Nevertheless, several passages have undoubted power, and some of the characters are memorable. The Yugoslav girl's story, sympathetically handled, attains in Valentina Cortese's beautiful performance real poignancy; the elderly, disenchanted Nazi's widow, finely played by Francoise Rosay, is another strong and authentic creation. The sequence of the attempted escape that leads to a general riot is horrifyingly well-done, and is twisted afterwards to a fine irony. The prison commandant addresses the inmates (most of them dripping wet from hoses having been turned on them), tells them how much he sympathises with their predicament, how he hopes it will soon be resolved, how it is all nobody's fault—just the war. . . . Rosay, replying to the Polish girl's question, "What did he say"? answers: "He said we'd better drink our tea".

Radvanyi does not attempt to analyse the political background of his subject—the strangeness of Italians, French, Poles, ex-Nazi Germans, Slavs, bundled together in the same camp; nor is it made clear how the various changes of political power in Europe since the war affect these people. The focus is on individuals whose lives have been utterly uprooted by war, who find themselves stateless, abandoned, unable to return to their homes, caught in an anonymous, transitory existence. At the end, the women look out through the barbed wire fence, resigned to the fact that only one thing can save them; having the right papers. Nothing else matters, and what they will do if they get their papers—unless, like the French girl, they marry—is unforeseeable. It is difficult to suggest any other conclusion—here it seems fatalistic rather than cynical.

It should be added that several other performances in various languages are excellent—Vivi Gioi, Gino Cervi as the prison guard, Simone Simon when her part permits. There is an impressive score by Roman Vlad. Why, incidentally, the silly title *Unwanted Women*? A straight translation, *Women Without Names*, would surely have been preferable. The tendency to sensationalise foreign films in retitling them—*Manèges* becoming *The Wanton* and Duvivier's *Au Royaume des Cieux* (though it almost deserves this) *Woman Hunt*—is rather squalid.

GAVIN LAMBERT.



Halls of Montezuma'. The lieutenant, Richard Widmark, the Colonel, Richard Boone, the war correspondent, Jack Webb

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA

LEWIS MILESTONE MUST have realised the implications of his new film before starting to shoot it: perhaps he no longer cares about the subject that once inspired his most passionate and personal films, or perhaps he justified his gesture to himself by some inner process of rationalisation. One cannot help feeling that a complete revulsion, a definite rejection of his previous attitude—however much one might deplore that—would have been preferable to this present compromise. *Halls of Montezuma* conforms to the outward pattern of *All Quiet* and *A Walk in the Sun*—we are introduced to a group of men (this time a company of U.S. Marines) before action in the Pacific during World War II, and emphasis in the events that follow is on characters and relationships, on the personal stresses of war, rather than the actual fortunes of battle. Michael Blankfort's script, clumsier in construction than *A Walk in the Sun*, utilises flashbacks to give the main characters their backgrounds, and contains most of the ingredients to be found in Milestone's previous war films. There is the young recruit who loses his nerve, the secretly afraid and revolted lieutenant, there are the tensions of waiting before battle with their contrast of conscripts and veterans, the passionate comradeships and sudden enmities: there is, too, a sustained reminder that war consists of panic, disgust, squalor and bitterness as well as heroism. At the same time, other devices insist that heroism, after all, really counts. The marines go into action with the music of the title blaring at full strength on the soundtrack; a letter from a dead soldier is read, telling us that war is a terrible thing, but that God is on America's side and she must never forget to be strong; and, with a choral reprise of "Halls of Montezuma", the marines go smiling into the final big battle at zero hour.

Some of the film is very efficiently handled—the sweeping and confused battle scenes with their long, lateral tracking shots, the patrol that sets off to the mountains to locate a Japanese rocket bomb base, the subdued tensions at headquarters—in a style that one recognises and has admired. There is even the signature image of a dying man's hand. Well realised though these sequences are, they are not equal to Milestone's best—but this seems to matter less than the significance of the film as a whole. A war film need not be pacifist or even embittered to be true and humane: but formal adherence to a personal pattern, episodes of disillusion and revulsion enclosed within a framework of Technicolor

flagwaving, appears a very distasteful gesture on Milestone's part.

The gap between the two world wars made the progression from direct pacifism to compassionate and horrified acceptance of war understandable in *All Quiet* and *A Walk in the Sun*; but *Halls of Montezuma* cannot similarly be justified in the climate of third world peace. The film belongs, really, to the current cold war series of American patriotic pictures, a tribute to past victory that serves as a reminder of military strength, and by implication an acceptance of the ominous *status quo* that exists in the world today. And this is less a progression than a retreat.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

LIGHTS OUT

FOR THE MOMENT Hollywood has perhaps said all that is either necessary or desirable on the two fashionable themes of racial intolerance and war-disabled soldiers. In *Intruder in the Dust* and *The Men* it has produced two first-rate films, honest, balanced and resolute. Anything more is bound, if good, to imitate and recapitulate, if bad, to imitate and cheapen. But no cycle, unfortunately, seems to run its course until every studio has had its say. Universal-International's *Lights Out* is the economy size, or two for the price of one, problem picture.

Larry, the war-blinded hero, is sent to hospital, makes a desperate effort to commit suicide, is rehabilitated, and decides to risk the future with a girl met at the hospital rather than to accept "security" from the parents of a rich girl he was engaged to before. The plot of *The Men* was scarcely less conventional. What *Lights Out* lacks is that toughness of fibre, that impressive concern with the human implications of a situation, which distinguished the earlier picture. Robert Buckner's script runs on the smoothly oiled rails of easy sentiment; feeling is not generated but exploited; the blind man's stick is waved before the eyes of the audience; the characters (notably courageous mother and understanding father) derive from the dream-world of soap opera. As a sop to fashion we are given some tediously handled semi-documentary sequences of hospital routine, and a little capsule psychology. All the rest is perfunctory, easy and artificial.

But the film touches its crudest point in the handling of the Negro question. In hospital Larry becomes friendly with a Negro soldier whose colour, of course, he cannot see—a plot twist which we can imagine delighted the film's makers. When he learns that he has accepted a Negro on equal terms he refuses to speak to him again. During the visit to his home in Florida he sees the light (why?—the film provides no semblance of an answer) and on encountering the Negro says: "I want to be friends again". The coloured soldier accepts this surely humiliating offer. (It is perhaps possible to discern a slight look of distaste on the face of that excellent actor James Edwards). For the rest, *Lights Out* is slackly directed by Mark Robson, and dingily photographed. Arthur Kennedy plays the leading part with a sympathy and discretion which it does not deserve.

The picture is a regrettable instance of that tendency to cash-in on the reputation established by better films which brought to an end such cycles as the documentary-style thriller. That some critics appear to have accepted *Lights Out* at its dubious face value as a serious film shows how easily this can be accomplished. A laudable subject is not enough, and if the makers of *Lights Out* had any intentions of dealing with it seriously they have most adroitly concealed them.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

ORCHESTRATION RUN RIOT?

In an article on the Film Music Congress at Florence which appeared last August in SIGHT AND SOUND, Antony Hopkins criticised the American practice of division of labour between composer and orchestrator, saying that much American film music was "orchestration run riot, but little else". Lawrence Morton, music critic of HOLLYWOOD QUARTERLY, defended the Hollywood methods in a recent article. We are grateful to HOLLYWOOD QUARTERLY for permission to reprint Mr. Morton's article, and have invited Mr. Hopkins to return to his attack.

Lawrence Morton

THERE IS NOTHING in the current crop of film scores half so interesting as the discrepancies between Daniele Amfitheatrof's report on the reception given the exhibit of American film music at the International Music Congress at Florence and the reports of the British delegates. "We had a good hand after every entry", wrote Mr. Amfitheatrof, "and prolonged applause, verging on an ovation, at the end of the show".¹ Hans Keller, a British delegate and critic, this time restrained his penchant for a metaphysical and Freudian vocabulary. Instead he indulged in invective, calling the exhibit "a repellent anthology" and noting that the assembly was composed of "musicians who could hardly be expected to like the stuff".² Antony Hopkins, another British delegate and a composer, wrote that "the Congress sat in stunned silence while reel after reel of highpowered music was blared out; only Copland's music to *The Red Pony* was vociferously applauded".³ The day following the exhibition, when Mr. Amfitheatrof had already left for Rome, another British delegate, Benjamin Frankel, took the floor and "attacked in no uncertain terms the bulk of the music we had heard the previous evening", according to Mr. Hopkins. "Heated speeches were made by partisans of both sides", he continued, "but the overwhelming majority supported Frankel in his denunciation".

Obviously, strong national passions had been aroused which, together with a long-standing bias against Hollywood, prevented any discussion of aesthetic matters on an aesthetic level. This was most unfortunate for one would have expected, from an assembly only half so august as Mr. Keller deemed this one, a truly analytical and inquiring attitude towards at least two specific issues that came up for discussion. In both instances conclusions were apparently reached without consideration of all the facts concerned, proving once again that propaganda can best be made when ignorance is not allowed to interfere with the formulation of judgments.

The first issue was economy of instrumental resources in the scoring of films. Impressed by the sound of Yves Baudrier's music for *Les Maudits*, which called for a very small orchestra, the Congress was impelled to cry out "Me, too!" and promptly went on record as favouring this kind of economy. But the larger issue of how and when to be economical appears to have been dodged. One would like to know, for instance, whether Baudrier's economy was dictated by aesthetic considerations or by a small budget, whether or not he had to underscore any earthquakes, chases, battles or horse races, whether *Les Maudits* is a pastoral scenic or an epic

historical drama, whether its love story (if any) is about high-flown purple passions or a sultry hall-bedroom amour.

It may indeed be true, as Mr. Hopkins writes that. Baudrier "can do more with one bass clarinet or a string quartet than most Hollywood composers can do with an orchestra of ninety". Aside from the fact that Hollywood composers never have orchestras of ninety (35 to 50 being even above average) while it is the British who employ the full resources of their great London orchestras—aside from this, it remains to be discovered precisely what Mr. Hopkins means by doing "more". One thing that can't be done with a string quartet is to equal the full sonority of an orchestral *tutti*, a noble and honourable sound that very few composers (even the most fastidious) and very few audiences (even the most snobbish) are quite willing to do without in dramatic music. The history of music gives no evidence that large sounds are inherently more vulgar than small ones. The crucial point, which the Congress overlooked, is that economy is a matter of style rather than of numbers of performers. It is style that makes a Mozart quartet sound more economical than one of Schubert's such as the great G major. Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* demands quadruple winds, yet it is a far more economical work than, say, Strauss' *Metamorphosis*, which needs only strings. And even Mahler's *Song of the Earth* is proof that some composers need very large orchestras to be economical with.

Thus the Congress' endorsement of economy was much like a politician's endorsement of virtue, an empty gesture. Attention to the real problem might have led to a consideration of what functions music is called upon to perform in films. So long as music is limited, as it is in both British and American films, to the performance of stereotyped functions, it is hardly likely to change very much from what it has been for many years. In the meantime, it will be no victory for music when Hamlet's funeral march is scored for a wind quintet, or when Ben Hur drives his chariot around the Coliseum to the accompaniment of a clarinet cadenza. But it will be a real victory when, with the active collaboration of a composer, music gets itself written into the script of a screenplay, with appropriate opportunity for the intimate sound of a string quartet as well as the powerfully moving sonority of the full orchestra.

The other issue on which the Congress scolded Hollywood is the custom of using orchestrators instead of allowing (or obliging) composers to score their own music. The solicitude of the Europeans for their American colleagues is indeed touching. It is also gratuitous. For the final judgment as to the correctness, style and practicability of an orchestrator's work can only be made by the composer. Criticism may thereafter voice the opinion that it doesn't like the composition or the orchestration, but only the composer can say if it matches his conception of what he wants to hear. And it would seem to me that if the orchestration is proper to the music, it should

¹ Daniele Amfitheatrof, *Italy-Music and Films* (Los Angeles: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 1950).

² *The Music Review*, Vol. XI, No. 3, August 1950, pp. 210-211.

³ *Sight and Sound*, Vol. XIX (New Series), No. 6, August 1950, pp. 243-4.

make no difference who did it. On these grounds we accept as authentic Rabaud's orchestration of Fauré's *Dolly*, Koechlin's of *Pelléas et Melisande*, Eustace's of *Prométhée*.⁴

Eager to condemn Hollywood, the Congress did not pause to ask precisely what the orchestrator does. It asked "why?"; but Mr. Amfitheatrof gave an inadequate answer, favouring only the chairman, Pizzetti, with a full reply in private. There are some composers whose sketches are so detailed and so complete that the orchestrator performs, in effect, the duties of an intelligent copyist, as do the assistants who for a quarter of a century have been transcribing to the orchestral score page the contents of Prokofiev's fully worked out piano sketches.⁵ One Hollywood orchestrator, asked to describe his job, said, "I take the music off the white paper and put it on the yellow". In such instances the orchestrators' discretion may be exercised only in such matters as assigning a phrase to the third clarinet instead of the second, spelling off the trombones in a lengthy passage requiring frequent change of position, making a practical division of labour between two percussion players, or deciding whether the harp part would be better notated in flats or sharps. There are not, to be sure, very many composers who execute their sketches in such detail, and no one can be expected to know who they are, since the list of credits does not tell. Neither does the absence of an orchestrator credit mean that the composer has orchestrated his own music. Aaron Copland for instance, has always used orchestrators when working in Hollywood. Yet their hands are never observable in the music for the simple reason that Copland's sketches are so complete that no other musical personality has an opportunity to intrude itself upon his music. Equally complete are the sketches of Adolph Deutsch, Hugo Friedhofer, David Raksin, and Miklos Rozsa, to name but a few. These composers are in fact responsible for every note in their scores, except in very rare instances when time pressure might operate against their usual practice.

Less well-known composers who work for small, independent producers do actually orchestrate their own music. The reasons here are economic: small budgets do not allow for orchestrators. In many cases the music is composed and orchestrated for the single orchestration fee, which has been established by the Musicians Union. But since there is no wage-scale for composition, many composers are obliged to "throw it in" for the price of orchestration in order to get the job. That is, they are paid very well for their drudgery but not at all for their creativity. Here is a situation to which a Congress somewhere, if only in Florence, might well give its attention.

By far the greater number of composers make sketches of varying degrees of roughness. Sometimes the association between a composer and his orchestrator is so intimate and of such long standing that they are in effect two aspects of a single mind, as Mr. Amfitheatrof pointed out to the questioning members of the Congress. In these cases, if the composer accepts the orchestration, criticism can justly make no separation between composition and orchestration, and the music must be evaluated as a unit. For all practical purposes it would be identical if either of the collaborators had done all the work.

In cases where the composer is totally unable or unwilling to orchestrate his own music, the orchestrator's responsibility

is great and often amounts to composition. He may have to supply inner voices, change harmonies, invent accompaniment patterns, insert counterpoints and disguise completely the keyboard origin of the music. He may also have to delete great handfuls of cluttering sonority. Criticism might very well say, on the basis of an examination of the composer's sketch, that he is simply not equipped for his job, that he is an ignorant hack. But it must also go on to say that the responsibility for the situation rests with the producers who hire hacks and not with orchestrators who make the music viable and are at least honest and skilled craftsmen. And is there any valid reason why the inventive musician who lacks craft, and the capable workman who lacks inventiveness, should not join forces to produce something for which there is a market? It is not the collaboration that should be condemned but the eventual output, if it is indeed *kitsch*. And if the collaboration should be able, by some chance, to produce a first-rate score, I see no reason why Messrs. Keller, Frankel and Hopkins should not accept it on the basis of the sounds made, regardless of who made them.

The collateral charge, that all Hollywood music is orchestrated alike, is simply not true, except for persons who listen to scores with organs other than the ear. The scores that are orchestrated alike are the ones that have been composed alike. Composers are very fussy about who orchestrates their music, on the basis of such factors as treatment of bass lines, voicing of brass, thickness or thinness of texture, ability to make twelve studio fiddlers sound as full as the string section of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. If a composer has written a Straussian horn tune in the manner of *Don Juan*, it had better not be scored for an alto flute. Such perversity, it so happens, thrives in the contemporary concert hall, where it has been mistaken for a virtue. One is thought to be original if one gives an idiomatic string melody to a trumpet, a flute passage to an E flat clarinet, a piccolo passage to a glockenspiel, particularly in arrangements of classical works for the ballet. This kind of perversity is little practised in Hollywood studios, and novelty of effect usually results from a dramatic situation on the screen, the virtuosity of a particular instrumentalist in the studio orchestra, or the special characteristics of the microphone. On the whole, orchestration is remarkably conservative in its intent, for the obvious reason that the music calls for conservatism. There would be little point in dressing up such music in Stravinsky's late instrumental style. This is an error that many "serious" composers have fallen into, as though every one of their pieces had the parodistic intent of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Much "modern" orchestration has thus become "wrong instrument" orchestration, just as much "modern music" has become "wrong note" music. When these criteria become generally fashionable and are applied to situations where they are not relevant, it follows that almost anything can be weighed in the balance and found wanting. Most Hollywood music gets the orchestration it deserves.

In an ideal world every film composer would be a master and would have time, energy and the desire to compose, orchestrate and conduct his own scores. The artistic purpose of every score would be calculated along with the planning of the film as a whole. But the industry is still a long way from granting music that status of a sovereign art co-operating with other sovereign arts towards the creation of a *gesamkunstwerk*. Meanwhile, any attack on the practice of using orchestrators is completely irrelevant to the real evils that exist. When composers operate like first-rate artists, their talents can never be watered down by orchestrators; and when the

⁴ Charles Koechlin, *Gabriel Fauré*. (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1945), pp. 69-70.

⁵ Israel V. Nestyev, *Sergei Prokofiev* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), pp. 67-68.

composers are hacks, their work is made viable, and sometimes even respectable, by the orchestrators.

Antony Hopkins

Mr. Morton's article, to which I have been asked to compose a reply, leaves me wondering where to begin. He seems to object so strongly to the sort of generalisations that always come out of any Congress, yet his article is full of the most sweeping statements, many of which seem a little strange coming as they do from someone who was thousands of miles away from this particular gathering when it was convened. I think that the best way in which I can cope with this defence of the American way of composing is to attempt to answer it paragraph by paragraph. But first let me make it clear to Mr. Morton that I am not donning the robes of Counsel for the Prosecution of American Film-music; the "longstanding bias" against Hollywood to which he so acidly refers is no part of my intellectual make-up; and were he to read other articles which I have written in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, he would have to admit that my normal critical approach was to seek the things that I could praise rather than those I might condemn.

Curiously enough, the extreme reluctance of this Congress to show any anti-American feeling has led Mr. Amfitheatrof and consequently Mr. Morton into the first pit-fall. The "good hand" of which Amfitheatrof so cheerfully writes was in fact dictated far more by the general policy of politeness and good-will than by any considerations of artistic appreciation. Anyone who was sitting in the body of the hall, as I was, could more accurately gauge the real temper of the audience than could the speaker on the platform; but even so, Mr. Amfitheatrof must have sensed a feeling of satiety in the audience fairly early on, to judge by the several apologies he made to us on the grounds that "all the music was rather loud, as the composers had elected to choose scenes which displayed their music at its most forceful—when it was not behind dialogue. . . etc. etc." The implication that Frankel attacked the American delegate when, so to speak, his back was turned I cannot leave unanswered. The extracts from American films filled a session of over two hours, at the end of which the chairman, Pizzetti, himself asked Amfitheatrof to explain the relationship of composer and arranger to the Congress. The explanation given did not seem entirely to satisfy the delegates, but by then we were all so exhausted after a day-long session that the chairman ruled further discussion out of order and adjourned the meeting. Next morning Mr. Amfitheatrof had left us, as he could apparently only spare us one day.

Our attempts at a "truly analytical and inquiring attitude" were thus somewhat impeded when the only founthead of information had so soon departed. Those of us who defended the scores we had heard the night before nearly all seemed to do so on political and not on musical grounds; we were told in torrents of passionate Italian that it was an insult to a great nation to criticise its film-music, a conclusion with which neither the chairman nor the British delegates were able to agree.

The issue of economy of scoring was decided on artistic grounds alone; it was the general feeling that overlavish instrumentalism tends to cloy the ear and that audiences should be made to appreciate musical effects through their subtle application as an integral part of the sound track, rather than as a technicolor wash superimposed on the film as an after-thought. I never suggested that a string quartet could equal

the full sonority of an orchestral *tutti*; but the function of incidental music in the cinema is not necessarily to provide a scale of musical sound that belongs more properly to the concert hall, but to enhance the emotional impact of the scene that we see before us. Baudrier's craft lies in proving that the underlining of an emotional situation of great tension can be as *effectively*—and note that I do not say as easily—accomplished by a string quartet as by a more exotic and very much larger combination. The artistic discipline that is implicit in a self-imposed limitation of instrumentation often redounds to the credit of the music and the composer. (Incidentally, if Hollywood composers only use orchestras of 35 to 50, how do *they* achieve the "full sonority of an orchestral *tutti*, a noble and honourable . . . etc.?) Mr. Morton begs the issue somewhat by quoting the *Symphony of Psalms* which, though it may have quadruple woodwinds, has no violins or violas.

In fact, the collaboration of composer and scriptwriter, and the integration of music and vision which my opponent so passionately advocates was the theme song of the Congress, throughout nearly every paper that was read. Nor was it suggested that Hamlet's funeral march should be scored for wind quintet; our intention was by no means to advocate writing of music which was by its sound or by its idiom inherently unsuitable to its context. Mr. Morton says that the history of music gives no evidence that large sounds are more vulgar than small ones. *Per se*, perhaps they are not; but in his own words, we were very much concerned with the "how and when". My quarrel with so much Hollywood music is that because the music depends to such an extent on the orchestration it is often too rich, too loud, and altogether too heavily charged to back situations which may demand for artistic satisfaction music of a far greater simplicity. Only composers of the stature of Copland or Virgil Thomson have the courage to be simple, or the faith in themselves to be austere.

We pass now to a more technical question—the use of arrangers and orchestrators. Amfitheatrof's defence of this practice—which I personally detest and which aroused the passions of the delegates to the Florence Congress far more than any discussion of economy of instrumental resources—was on much the same lines as Mr. Morton's. "Only the composer can say if it matches his conception of what he wants to hear. . . . If the orchestration is proper to the music, it should make no difference who did it". Footnote four, if followed up, is not the best argument in Mr. Morton's favour. Koechlin says of Fauré in the same book:

"Very often the orchestration of his music is uneasy . . . the master whose vocal, piano and chamber music technique was perfect, was never completely at home with the orchestra; moreover he was not reluctant to entrust this work to some of his friends". Later he goes on to say ". . . For him this side of his art was somewhat accessory, and as most often one cannot state definitely that he was responsible for the orchestration, it is better to refrain from criticisms or eulogies *which may not be his due*". (My italics.)

The point at issue at the congress was never one of expressing a lack of confidence in the abilities of the orchestrators; their technique is unquestionable even if at times their taste is not. The finger of suspicion was pointed at the "composers". Who are these people, whose names never seem to appear on any concert programmes? What else have they written; what pages have they placed upon the altar of Art, rather than on the lap of Mammon? When we hear music which so depends on the

(continued on page 30)

HUMPHREY JENNINGS

A Memoir

Nicole Vedres

I HAVE FOR A long time asked myself where I first met him, and how. . . . And often when we met in Paris, by chance or otherwise, at the corner of a street on the left bank, in front of the window of a picture shop, in the gilded halls of Unesco, we both tried to remember: where the devil was it? when? It was not really very important. Humphrey was one of those people whom one feels one has always known and whose sudden appearance—wherever it might be—seemed perfectly natural. Suddenly he was there, friendly but elegant, voluble but perceptive, excited always, extraordinarily alive. And this strikes us as strange, sometimes, in an Englishman. . . .

Now I remember. The first time—it was soon after the end of the war. I was looking in the records of the Ministry of Information in London for photographs which would illustrate the work of the British documentary film makers. We had just discovered in Paris, at more or less private showings, and with great astonishment, the documentaries made in London during the war. At last the invisible had shown itself. At last the truth was there, with all its *nuances*, its unexpected projections and, sometimes, its disarming simplicity. At last we could say: this is how they lived, this is how the incendiary bombs blazed, this is how the sirens wailed, this is how the people walked in the streets, one smiling, another running. This world of war, which we had seen in France under another aspect, as if in a different world—this world was at last crystallized for us, but still warm and actual. . . .

My researches in the records of the Ministry that day, however, were not proceeding without difficulty. The place was poorly lit, the photographs well indexed, perhaps, but by a system which baffled the uninitiated, the typists very busy. But someone came up to help me—I saw him with difficulty, crouched as I was over the pigeonholes. Without haste, curiosity or insistence he gave me some advice, and then went away. I asked who it was. Humphrey Jennings, someone said. I would have liked to leave everything, abandon the pigeonholes and photographs, to run after him, call him back, tell him how much his work meant to us, how we admired the dexterity of his art, his firm and detached taste, the profound flair and boldness. I would have liked . . . but he had gone.

Many others have already examined, and will analyse in detail, the value of each of his works, and have noticed how much his qualities both as writer and as painter appear in it, with a strictness and economy which one admires particularly when they stem from a richly endowed temperament. But at present, whenever we think of the work of Jennings, it is Humphrey himself whom we remember. I see him again in Paris, at some session of the Cinémathèque, arm in arm with Henri Langlois, attending the showing of some still unfinished film which a friend wanted him to see. He chatted for a long time, in perfect, lively French, with some young, unknown spectator who was overwhelmed by such friendly treatment from the English "Master". I hear him, in a little neighbourhood cinema, laughing aloud at some joke in a mediocre film because he knew how to laugh, because he loved to laugh when others laughed with him. Surely it was this liveliness, this sympathy with people, which led him to find the most direct contact with them, and which turned him away from writing and painting towards the cinema. He was, he remains,

one of those people who feel that in this threatened world we have no longer much time, we have no longer all eternity before us, and if we wish to communicate with people we must do it quickly. In one sense the cinema, which is for others a means of "arriving" (at fame, fortune, comfort, I don't know which) was for him almost a sacrifice. His poems and paintings signified to him and to those of his type the message which he had to deliver as art. But he felt bound—and this without any concession, without any surrender of taste—to share it with a greater number. And when we knew that his career was cut off, suddenly, abruptly, there far from England and from France—we must all have wished, as after the London meeting—to call him back, to overtake him, to recapture him, to tell him. . . .

JENNINGS' BRITAIN

Gavin Lambert

I see London

*I see the Dome of Saint Paul's
like the forehead of Darwin*

*I see London stretched away North and North-East
along dockside roads and balloon-haunted allotments*

*Where the black plumes of the horses recede
and the white helmets of the rescue-squad follow . . .*

*I see the green leaves of Lincolnshire
carried through London*

on the wrecked body of an aircraft . . .

These lines from a poem by Humphrey Jennings suggest a sequence from one of his films, not simply because of their visual emphasis, but for their juxtaposition of image and image—the kind of simile and "unexpected projections", as Nicole Vedres calls them, or "inspired incongruities", as Edgar Anstey described them—which gives his films their extraordinary, intense personality. This constant element of surprise, the procession of emotional and intellectual correspondences which was the basis of Jennings' style as a film-maker (and, it seems, as a writer—he never published anything he wrote), stems no doubt from his first vocation: he began as a painter, and his pictures were surrealist in manner. His passion for the cinema, those who knew him well have said, arose from his growing interest in the collective spirit, which led him in fact from Mass Observation (the movement founded by Charles Madge) to mass communication.

Of the 16 films Jennings made on his own, ten are concerned directly with aspects of the English scene, best summarised in the title of an early film, *Heart of Britain*. This country—its landscapes and its cities, its people, its business and leisure, its past and present—he approached full-face and profile; officially all the portraits were commissioned, since they were films produced for government departments, and many of them carry a strong sense of occasion; yet nearly all of them are intimate, some are capricious, and only two that I have seen were subdued by having to present a case. This in itself is no mean achievement in documentary, where for the last ten years pressure on the individual has been as strong in its way as it has in the studios.

The first composite picture of Jennings' Britain appears in *Listen to Britain* (1941), a wonderfully sensitive evocation of this country at the beginning of the second year of the war. Jennings directed and edited it in collaboration with Stewart McAllister,



"Listen to Britain". Shots from the sequence of the soldiers in the train at night.

who has edited nearly all his best films, and in Ian Dalrymple he was fortunate to find a producer who continued to appreciate and encourage his talent. The technique of *Listen to Britain* is based completely on the power of association. The soundtrack and the camera range through a variety of scenes and incidents—the course of a plane through the sky and the stillness of the countryside, two air-raid wardens standing at evening on the esplanade of a seaside town and dance music coming from a nearby palais, a train drawing to a standstill in the middle of the countryside at night and a group of Scots soldiers in a carriage singing, talking, and playing cards together; and the marvellous climactic sequence at the National Gallery during a lunchtime concert,

with a crowded audience of service people and civilians, at the end of which the camera leaves the hall, showing us Trafalgar Square, Duncannon Street, the music of Myra Hess's piano and the orchestra swelling up, rising to a crescendo as we are now inside a factory and even the noise of machines is dulled. . . . Re-viewed now, *Listen to Britain* has an additional nostalgic quality; the sounds and images, in themselves and their different contexts, bring back a particular time and climate with almost overwhelming aptness.

Not the least striking quality of *Listen to Britain* is its glimpses of ordinary people—the group sitting out a dance in the dance-hall, the soldiers in the train, the lunchtimers and sandwich-eaters at the National Gallery—caught with such quick affection and precision, without a trace of patronage or caricature. This is an almost unique achievement in the modern British cinema, and Jennings' ability to make contact with all kinds of people, to present them naturally, acutely observed, shows at its strongest in *Fires were Started*, one of his most ambitious films, and his masterpiece.

Fires were Started (1943) is the story of an N.F.S. sub-station

in London during the blitz; the tempo and character of the group in its hours of leisure and stand-by, the tension, comradeship and casualties of actual firefighting. Again the approach is impressionistic. Jennings builds up his picture of the men at the station, their relationships to each other, emphasising now one character, now another: in the literal sense there is not much construction, and an impatience with narrative as such, but the personality behind the film never falters. The new recruit, played with engaging reserve by William Sansom, is perhaps the most successful single characterisation, and the passages of his introduction to the others, to the routine, throws the unit as a whole most sharply into focus. The whole picture crystallises most strikingly in the sequence when, as the men wait in the recreation room for a call during a night raid, Sansom at the piano plays in each fireman as he enters, to the tune of "One man went to mow". This is an unforgettable piece of human observation, showing Jennings' talent from every angle: it is at once humorous, ironic, touching, affectionate, a scene of perfect spontaneity in itself and of strong dramatic effect in its context.

The second half is as concentrated as the first is leisurely and digressive; the dockside firefighting scenes, excitingly directed and photographed. Here again, though the emphasis is on the action, the increasing ravages of the fire and the attempts to stop it before it spreads to a warehouse stored with explosives, Jennings does not lose sight of the characters. There has been no other British film about the war like *Fires were Started*, and when seen again to-day its poetic statement, its wide human sympathies encompassing both particular figures and particular happenings, and yet evoking the whole atmosphere of London under fire, appear as something unique.

London Can Take It (1940), which Jennings made with Harry Watt before *Listen to Britain* and *Fires Were Started*, is by contrast



"London Can Take It"



"London Can Take It"

"Fires Were Started": left, the "one man went to mow" scene, William Sansom at the piano: right, a fire-fighting scene.





"A Diary for Timothy". Four shots from the opening sequence, showing the threshold of Timothy's existence: the image of his mother dissolves into an image of war, and this is replaced by a long shot of the Welsh mining town.

as anonymous as the other two are personal. The film catches superficially a general mood, as with its material it could hardly fail to do, but it is the mood of an exceptionally good newsreel. To judge it fairly, one must remember the film was made as direct propaganda export for America (with a commentary by Quentin Reynolds), and as such was eminently successful. The material—London at the end of 1940 during the first air raids, the tube shelters, the bombed out, the turmoil and bleakness of destruction combined with improvised "business as usual"—was shot by several units, and the picture it conveys is deliberately collective. It is interesting to contrast, all the same, these fragmentary glimpses (couples sleeping in the shelters, people riding to work on a cart, the rescue squads), that remain on the level of reportage, with Jennings' treatment of similar material in his later films.

The last phase of a period which *Listen to Britain* and *Fires Were Started* so surely evoke is explored in *A Diary for Timothy*; as Timothy lives the first six months of his life (he was born in September, 1944) the world into which he is growing up is described. The choice of people, of incidents, is characteristically unexpected. There is, of course, the war—from the news of Arnheim coming through on the radio to the Russian spring offensive in Germany that reached the approaches of Berlin—and the first image of the film, after the birth of Timothy in hospital, is of a battalion of soldiers training. Thus from the opening a note of urgency is struck, and held and echoed throughout—by the aeroplane that suddenly roars overhead as the farmer inspects his crops (a device very similar to the one in *Listen to Britain*) and, not without irony, by a glimpse of Stuart Hibberd at the B.B.C. with his shirt collar undone. A Welsh miner at work when a colliery accident occurs, an R.A.F. pilot convalescing from wounds, an engine-driver, are other characters whose experiences are recounted and who add to the feel of the world during these six months. In his concern to stress the persistent demands of war, Jennings sometimes overstresses; the scene of John Gielgud playing the Gravedigger scene from "Hamlet" at the Haymarket Theatre intercut with an A.R.P. squad trying to reach a trapped bomb victim, looks artificial and over-emphatic, and is out of key with the rest, which proceeds (like E. M. Forster's gentle, elliptical commentary) by inference rather than statement.

A Diary for Timothy shows Jennings' impressionism stretched to its utmost, and the result, like the period it reflects, is almost too transitional; but it is a film of startling originality. The perspective

as a whole remains slightly blurred, while many details are beautifully apt and precise. Implicit as a whole, certainly, is the end of an age that was sadly lacking in peace and consolation, and the prospect of a future wholly uncertain. The lack, sadder than ever, of peace and consolation to-day, gives the film now an extra poignancy, but also an extra limitation. In *Listen to Britain* Jennings suddenly deserted the spectacles of wartime for a beautiful, still landscape, the spring countryside, and it was moving and effective. In *A Diary for Timothy* he offers a Christmas scene after the desperate autumn, capped by Arnheim, of 1944, and this is more difficult to accept. His love of juxtaposition, a new current of thought or emotion announced by an image that looks at first quite unrelated to what has gone before, is one of the riches of his style, but it can sometimes look like an evasion.

As if himself not properly reconciled to these later days, Jennings followed *A Diary for Timothy* with one of his few real failures, *The Cumberland Story*. This account of the modernisation of an old mine, and the rescue of its workers from apathy, is oddly impersonal and undistinguished. Then he moved into a foreign climate of dejection and suspended life with *A Defeated People*, a vivid and compassionate series of impressions of post-war Germany. Perhaps there are signs in these post-war years that he wanted to find a new inspiration away from the native scene; though he returned to it with *Family Portrait*, commissioned for the Festival of Britain, he had gone to Greece to make the first of several films there when he was killed at the age of 43.

Family Portrait is in the nature of a summing-up, a meditation from a distance on the country whose face he had described so closely during the war years. Its opening analogy, the pages of a family album being leafed through, sets the tone of speculation and retrospect. It ranges swiftly and freely through time, from the "magic mirrors" used by Drake's fleet in his victory over the Armada, to the great reflectors of modern radar apparatus; the English tradition and spirit are sought out in landscape and history, in great personages of the past—Shakespeare, Newton, Darwin—and ordinary people of the present. These evocations are affectionate, reassuring, and only once—when a farmer and a scientist are seen talking together in a field below the Long Man of Wilmington and the commentator says, "Let us pray for these two to agree"—are momentous issues of the present acknowledged. How far Jennings determined this mood by the sense of occasion, how far it was genuinely optimistic, one does not know; certainly at this time his personal enthusiasms were undimmed, and *Family Portrait* is full of indications of these.

The fascination of science: the love of landscape, and of the sea: music (his passion for this, and his superb dramatic use of it, comes out in nearly all his films): a personal sense of the continuity of history and its varied manifestations, which is at the base of many of his analogies and digressions: an affection for simple people and pleasures, and for the ritual and pageantry that symbolise them—the whole rare combination of an artist of highly specialised sensibilities making contact with collective existence is in some ways at its most complete in *Family Portrait*. Yet the film has not the emotional drive of some of the earlier ones.

This withheld urgency, though, serves also to set off the earlier films. The conscious distance from the subject, the glimpses of, and allusions to, experiences and dramas that Jennings has conveyed more intimately at other times, holds perhaps a significance not only for him but for others. For as the war stimulated unexpected contacts and solidarities, so the forlorn peace has brought isolation to many; an affirmative gesture, like the Festival of Britain itself, is formal rather than personal. In the album that opens *Family Portrait*, the particular Britain that Jennings caught so well is now fixed in still photographs, slightly blurred from enlarging: in Britain now it is the illustrious he invokes for consolation, the continuity of tradition, the beauty of nature—and radar, too, can look beautiful photographed in silhouette against the evening sky—but this is not, and cannot be, quite the same thing.

Three images from "Family Portrait". Below, a landscape



"Family Portrait". Left, the spirit of the pub: right, the spirit of youth, a sailor on duty.

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BOOK REVIEWS

HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM. Volume 3, 1914-18. Rachael Low. (Published under the joint auspices of the British Film Institute and British Film Academy. Allen & Unwin, 35/-.)

Reviewed by Michael Powell

THIS IS A WELL ARRANGED, well produced book of 332 pages. It costs 35/-, and is worth the money. The cover and the wrapper will not help to sell it.

Since I am a film technician of 26 years standing, I find the book absorbing and disgusting, disturbing and reassuring, and very moving. It is also a good reference book. There is an index, which I have not been able to fault.

Miss Rachael Low, like her distinguished father, is a worker, a lover and an enthusiast. Whether she is also an artist neither we nor she will know until she has finished this self-appointed task. It is certain that nobody could do it better.

A more direct prose style would be a help. Her lay-out is good. So is the type. The notes are useful. Her publishers have done her proud. But there are not enough illustrations for the money.

The book is divided into two parts: The Industry and The Films. I would like to point out to Miss Low that she will only add to a common confusion if she herself confuses Industry with Business. The production of films is an industry; the selling and buying of them is a business: entirely different types of human beings are involved in these two pursuits and there is a wide ditch between them. You can always tell a producer; he is the one in the ditch.

Miss Low would be doing a service to the public if she drew sharper lines between her descriptions of the three functions—Production, Renting (I prefer this old-fashioned but accurate title to the more grand one of Distribution), and Exhibition. Several times she records the movement of a renting firm “into production”: this is common talk but is confusing in an already confusing art: a renter cannot produce films, he finances them if he wishes to have the exclusive selling of them; he advises: and his advice can be shrewd though rarely inspiring; this is natural: a renter has to have his feet on the ground (Wardour Street is paved with good intentions), a producer must have wings, if he is ever to create that occasional film which satisfies everyone, makes money for everyone and advances the art of production another step or two.

I am absorbed by this vivid history of the war years, by the energy and courage and ingenuity that was displayed equally by producers, renters and exhibitors: and I am amazed at the progress of the technicians and of the inventors during such a difficult time. I am disgusted at the low standard of education, taste, background and literary knowledge of the average producer; and by the stupidity and lethargy of the showmen. I am disturbed by the resemblance between our present difficulties and theirs: and for the same reason that we are still the most profitable dumping-ground for American films, whose business men are out to eliminate all competition in any way they can. I am reassured to read that Miss Low does not subscribe to the legend that “the Americans got ahead in the war while we were fighting for our lives”, but that, on the contrary, she realises that America’s rapid advance to commercial and technical supremacy was inevitable. Since we share the same language, we could never (and never can) compete with Hollywood on their own smooth and efficient lawns; we have to play the match at home and take advantage of every well-worn patch in the fairway, of every piece of local knowledge, of every calm morning when the smoke in inspiration curls upwards, slow but straight. Finally, I am moved by



Florence Turner and Marie Doro in “Sally Bishop”

sharing the struggles of these past creators and purveyors of this most beautiful and inspiring art of story-telling which we call The Film Industry.

Time and again from Miss Low’s sober and documental pages, the creative artist rises triumphant, and with him rise the graphs of the box-offices, the facades of picture-palaces, the Neo-Grecian interiors, “the whole forming an excellent feature”—Miss Low’s quotations from the *Bioscope* at this period are particularly happy—the art of salesmanship and the “vertically integrated combine”. Hepworth! D’Annunzio! Griffith! Chaplin! Pearson! And again Hepworth! There were giants in those days. Who was to come after? Only Disney and Michael Balcon, that I can see.

Hepworth emerges from these pages as a great man, imaginative, industrious, generous, far-seeing, courageous, a man whose own tenderness and sensibility matched those eternal qualities in the English people, making them the hallmark, then and today, of the truly popular British film. He can be delightfully caustic (*see p. 199*). English films without him are unthinkable.

Only once his leadership faltered, in 1915, when he stated his faith in naturalism (which Miss Low confuses, not alone, with realism). He cannot be blamed. Naturalism, in acting and décor, was a logical step from stories photographed on exterior and with sunlight. But, in this case, the logical step took us all thirty years in the wrong direction.

Baynham Honri’s Appendix on the Film Studios of those years is a fascinating monograph. I hope he will revise and enlarge it in future editions, for it will certainly bring old-timers out of their shells. I wish he would give clearer geographical descriptions of these lost studios and of their present fate. He is not the only one to get a thrill out of these devout pilgrimages.

At the end of his article, he remarks: “During the final phase of the period under review . . . the days of the versatile studio worker who could build sets, work the camera or act in a film were numbered. Specialization had arrived and the British film industry had grown up.” I envy the simplicity of his outlook but I do not share it.

Appendix 2 is a shot-by shot synopsis of *Ultus and the Three Button Mystery* by George Pearson. It is wonderful.

Appendix 3 is part of the script for *Shadows* by Harold Weston. It is strictly for the student. It contains all the faults of cheap and sentimental fiction, projected with blood-curdling efficiency. Miss Low has done a service in printing it.

Appendix 4 is the jewel of the book. It includes all the films made between August, 1914, and December, 1918, upon which reliable information could be obtained, with cast, credits and distributor, wherever possible. Did I say jewel? It is a gold mine.

Miss Low has taken great pains to arrange the films alphabetically. It would be better chronologically. Production, with its fluctuations, its geniuses, its trends, its inspirations and combinations, is better studied year by year. An example is Kenelm Foss, the only outstanding writer of original screen-plays in this era. In 1914, 1915 and 1916, nearly a dozen original screen stories were written by him: in the next two years he only did adaptations of other men's stories. I detect the dead hand of the financier in this. I suspect the loss of the first fine creative enthusiasm. Am I right, Foss?

I must cite some of the nuggets in this mine.

Elvey, the showman. What a worker! What a talent! Why, he was half the British film industry in those years. Tom White, as wise now as he was then (he probably looked older), photographer of half a dozen great films. Eliot Stannard, the most successful writer of screen adaptations, actor, producer, I well remember his wit and wonderful talk at Elstree in 1925. Milton Rosmer and Irene Rooke, bringing their wonderful talents from the theatre to films. George Loane Tucker, that great talent, whose tragic death was a tragedy for the cinema. Geoff Faithfull, lighting cameraman in 1917 and lighting cameraman now. Delysia as "She", presented by Cochran! What names gleam in those early films, names chronicled without comment but, I am sure, with relish by Miss Low: Jack Buchanan, Lupino Lane, Billy Merson, Edith Evans, Ninette de Valois, Bombardier Wells. A. E. Matthews, Henry Edwards, Nancy Price, Kathleen Harrison, Aubrey Smith, Roland Pertwee, Ronald Colman, June, Ronald Squire . . . And how I should like to see the first version of *The Great Adventure* with Henry Ainley (instead of Monty Woolley), and *The Woman's Land Army*, 1917.

But I do hope the publishers will design a new jacket and a new uniform binding for all the new editions to come.

HOLLYWOOD LOOKS AT ITS AUDIENCE: A Report of Film Audience Research, by Leo A. Handel (University of Illinois Press, \$3.50).

Reviewed by Penelope Houston

A FILM OF A FEW YEARS AGO, *Magic Town*, depicted a statistician's dream, a town whose responses to any given question exactly matched those arrived at for the nation by the public opinion polls. Fame caused the inhabitants to become self-conscious, and to lose this peculiar virtue, but the film itself expressed no doubts as to the value of this surely excessive normality. It is, indeed, always difficult to accept the assumption that human reactions and outlook vary so little that the views of a nation can be adequately summed up through a small statistical sample. The temporary confounding of the public opinion polls by the Truman election was, therefore, a source of pleasure not altogether malicious: the percentages had proved, at last, fallible. But, while recognising this possibility of error, we have no alternative but to accept as a whole the statistician's findings, to regard the verdict of each sample as a word from Magic Town.

Somewhere between the Listener Research methods of the B.B.C. (which does not take the Third Programme off the air because its audience is too small to be measured) and the market research techniques of commercial firms, come the Audience Research methods employed by Hollywood studios. These are described at some length in a recent book by Leo Handel, whose organisation, the Motion Picture Research Bureau, now operates exclusively for M.G.M. The other leading organisation in the field, Audience Research Inc., is a Gallup subsidiary.

The raw material is the composition of the audience. Mr. Handel states that the average number of admissions to an "A" picture was put, in 1948, at 13 million, a drop from the 1946 figure of 16 million. The "maximum potential audience" is considered to be that for *Gone With the Wind*: 61 million tickets were sold during the course of four releases. With a considerable parade of statistics, Mr. Handel announces that the young visit the cinema more often than the old, that men and women go about equally, but that if they go together the woman tends to choose the picture, that men go alone more often than women and, rather surprisingly, that the better educated (American high school standard) go more frequently than the worse educated. He also claims that "opinion leaders" (those who advise their friends to see films) "do more radio listening and read more magazines, and their communications habits are more active than is true of people in the same age, income and education group who are not movie leaders. Furthermore, movie opinion leadership seems to be related to a special inclination towards social activity. Leaders telephone and visit a great deal and show other signs of active social participation." This delightfully solemn announcement is typical of Mr. Handel's addiction to jargon.

This raw material can be investigated for two purposes: sociological and commercial. Mr. Handel discusses the sociological issues but is hampered by the lack of reliable data. He produces some extremely complicated charts and tables indicating what type of film is liked by what type of audience—fantasies and studies of social conditions coming near the bottom of the list, musicals and comedies near the top. He also discusses the somewhat inconclusive results achieved by testing audience reaction to specific educational films. On the key question, however, the effect produced by films on the audience, he retires into the conjecture which, as yet, takes the place of information.

But Mr. Handel's real concern is with the commercial aspects of audience research: the extent to which the information discovered can help to sell pictures. In the past, box-office figures were assumed to provide a fairly adequate guide. Now, with a falling market, and stronger competition between companies, tests are conducted to break down these figures, to investigate which of the picture's component parts determines its success or failure. Mr. Handel describes these tests with great enthusiasm. Surveys are made to determine potential audience reaction to titles, cast and story. "The difference between the number of people found to be interested in seeing a picture entitled *D-Day in Las Vegas* and the number interested in seeing one entitled *Lady Luck* is six million admissions", says Mr. Handel proudly of one of these title tests. As far as stars are concerned, different actors are found to be liked by different types of people, and by adding up the percentages and casting a variety of stars a mixture can be arrived at to appeal, it is assumed, to everyone. As for stories, "it can be found out before or while the picture is being

produced whether certain jokes, punchlines, references to actual or fictional happenings are comprehended by the average motion picture patron. Depending on the results of the survey, the lines or scenes under analysis may be changed". "It is not inconceivable", Mr. Handel says elsewhere "that the extent to which different story elements should be blended to please the audience may be determined by research studies. The same would hold true of atmosphere and background". It is noteworthy that to create "an audio-visual impression" people subjected to the various questionnaires are simultaneously given the questions to read, and read aloud to by the investigator. This, in spite of the assumed educational level of the filmgoer, is apparently not considered an insult to his intelligence.

All this is as nothing to the methods of the researchers when they actually have some film to work with. Audiences are given forms to fill in, they are visited at home and interviewed "in depth". Sample audiences are given buttons to press indicating enjoyment or dislike, microphones are concealed around them to record their comments. Mr. Handel mentions enthusiastically a plan to photograph them with infra-red rays, and Paramount's development of "a small electronic gadget to record the spectator's heart-beat and rate of breathing as scenes of love, violence and excitement unfold upon the screen". Researchers also investigate the different effect of various advertising techniques and, "whenever the proportion of moviegoers who express the desire to see a certain picture is too far below the proportion who actually know about it, special investigations are in order which may uncover motives for audience resistance. Respondents who indicate that they do not want to see the picture are asked why they feel this way". The effect on "audience resistance" is a matter of opinion.

Mr. Handel's ambition appears to be to reduce film production to something resembling as closely as possible the operations of a mechanical brain. The audience selects, through its sample representatives, story, title and stars; at intervals it is called in and given gadget tests to see how it reacts to pieces of film. Human fallibility, it is true, hampers the investigations to some extent. People, Mr. Handel says rather irritably, may let the researchers down by not going to films they have said they wanted to see (the natural reaction to such questions, whether from good manners, good nature or mere apathy is, it appears, "Yes"), they may forget to press the right buttons, and they have a nasty habit of just dropping in to the nearest cinema.

But the assumption is that the dictator public knows not only how to enjoy films, but how to determine their creative elements. The popular art is not yet as popular as all that. Mr. Handel, unfortunately, does not answer those questions which are likely to strike the inquisitive reader. How much are these techniques actually used in practice: how much of what we see is the result of creative enterprise, and how much of a surrender to the assumed wishes of the audience? Is their use on the increase?—the answer to this may well be "yes", since Hollywood is in some fear of losing its audience. Finally, have the various recommendations ever yet produced a box-office winner to formula? If not, it would seem considerably safer to rely on the old hit or miss methods. They at least assumed that the filmgoer could be trusted. Mr. Handel stalks him like a wild, dangerous and valuable animal: his methods may yet frighten the quarry away altogether.

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FRANK CAPRA

by

RICHARD GRIFFITH

2/6

Illustrated

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(FILM MUSIC, *continued from page 23*)

artifice of the scoring, when we hear page after page of "effects" with no development, no continuity, and little individuality, are we really being so impertinent if we are tempted to doubt the qualifications of the man behind it? I do not mind if Copland has a glorified copyist to do his dirty work for him, because I know from the concert world that he is a composer of stature, and a man whom one can trust. Even so, I feel that for the fees he undoubtedly receives for his film scores he should make that amount of sacrifice to the Muse, and do his own scoring—yes, the exhausting physical labour is in itself a tribute to the spark of divinity that is the breath of genius. The skill of the arranger makes possible a racket; the employment for huge sums of people who represent to the world that they are composers, when they do not really justify the word. That such a situation exists Mr. Morton makes no attempt to deny, and it is the possibility of abuse that such a system permits that the congress so deprecated. We do not suggest for a moment that all the names one sees writ so large among the credit titles are dubious. But coming from a land where enormous sums are made by popular composers, who have musical shorthand writers to take down melodies they can barely pick out with one finger on the piano, Mr. Morton cannot be so ingenuous as to express surprise if, brought up as we are on the legend of Hollywood's ability to remould entirely even the human body, we are suspicious of a collaboration that may well protect artistic practices of a thoroughly reprehensible kind. Perhaps it would be polite to allow Mr. Morton the last word; I do so agree with him that "most Hollywood music gets the orchestration it deserves".

TELEVISION

"WHY DO PEOPLE ALWAYS talk of television as a medium, and never as an entertainment?" asks Jim Edwards in a recent broadcast of *Take It From Here*. "Because", replies Dick Bentley, "what you see isn't very good, and isn't very bad; it's just medium".

This talk of the television medium is not, I think, accidental; it indicates a widespread, as yet largely unformed, feeling that television is a medium in the sense that broadcasting is not. That is to say that like the film it is a new kind of language, with its own characteristic techniques of expression (and by corollary, of observation), whereas broadcasting is primarily a medium of communication. If this be accepted, numerous deductions may be drawn from it. One—that personnel drawn from film or theatre are likely to adapt themselves more easily to television, and to contribute more to it than those with broadcasting experience only—was touched on last month. This time, I venture to suggest another, fundamentally more important; namely, that whereas broadcasting must be almost entirely confined to diffusing matter which already exists outside itself—talks, stage plays, music, news bulletins,—television has a potential capacity for creation from *within itself*; and it is a capacity as yet scarcely realised, let alone explored.

Not to be too ponderous, let us consider television's great headache, and the viewer's bane (for the most part)—variety. Television variety up to the moment has been notably imitative of broadcast variety, as one can see by reviewing the main types of programme. First, there are the televised stage shows, and cabaret shows of the Cafe Continental or Music Hall type, in which "turns" of various kinds—dancers, jugglers, acrobats, singers, conjurors, comedians—are simply seen through the camera; these are frankly and unashamedly simple communication, without any nonsense about the television medium, and are ninety per cent boredom. Sometimes these turns are given a programme of their own (as in the current series with Sally Ann Howes) but the effect is much the same. Then there is such a programme as *Picture Page*, the television equivalent of *In Town To-night*, which is seldom boring, but no less artless, the cameras simply carrying us neatly from one interview to another. Next come the feature variety programmes, written round a certain personality or personalities—the Terry Thomas Show, or *At Home with the Bradens*, for example—which are the television equivalent of *Itma*, *Take It From Here* or *Life with the Lyons*. Finally, there is *Kaleidoscope*, television's mirror-image of *Monday Night at Eight*, in which one may find the beginnings, primitive though they are, of some attempt to use the television medium as a special form of presentation.

In this catalogue of the viewer's staple variety fare, two things are apparent: first, that none of these programmes fails in its nature to be depressingly like its broadcast original, and is thus held down with leaden feet on the elementary level of the mere communication of that which has been created *outside* television; and secondly, that even within this unimaginative and limited range, the programmes are more interesting in so far as they involve more special writing and arrangement for the medium.

What I suggest is true here for variety, I believe to be true of television as a whole. I know of only two people who are making any apparent contribution to the creative development of television in this country. One is Christian Simpson, who specialises in the imaginative use of his cameras, and especially in the imaginative presentation of music. The other is Duncan Ross, the scriptwriter of the now famous *Course of Justice* series, who by observing and recreating real life in terms of the television medium, has established a new standard for television documentary, which is unlikely to be surpassed for a long time.

In picking out these two names, I am not unaware of certain qualifications. I know, for example, that Christian Simpson's experiments do not always succeed, and that his devices are sometimes 'arty' and distracting, but occasional failure is the penalty the courageous pay for their experiments. I know, too, that Duncan Ross himself would vehemently maintain that he is only half of a team, and that without the careful casting, rehearsal and production of Ian Aitken, his own contribution would be abortive. None of these qualifications, however, affects the main argument.

The case of Duncan Ross is especially illuminating, for this creator of television's most successful series is, in fact, the only full-time script writer permanently attached to the television staff. Nothing could illustrate more effectively the contempt with which television is regarded by its administrators as a creative medium, or how much is lost by this attitude. Even the smallest film company in continuous production has its scenario department, employing several writers to discover, adapt or originate suitable story material. But B.B.C. Television, dominated by the practice of Broadcasting House and by a conception of the television medium which puts it no higher than a kind of visual telephone, has no such department.

Until it has, a great deal of television entertainment is going to be "just medium". Outside writers have no chance of discovering the potentialities of television and learning how to use them; in any case, it is uneconomic for a free-lance writer of any ability to devote himself to work of such a highly specialised, speculative and comparatively unrewarding nature. The most he can do is to create something *outside* television, aimed at other markets as well, which is simply to maintain the present position. I am quite sure that if B.B.C. Television were to devote a small fraction of its budget to creating a permanent team of creative writers under an experienced editor, it would find itself repaid many times over, and television would become an altogether more exciting experience.

ERNEST LINDGREN

THE SOUND TRACK

RECENT GRAMOPHONE RECORDS based on film sound-tracks include a pleasing theme from *Ha'penny Breeze* by Philip Green. (Columbia DX 1724). The principal idea is given out on a concertina-like instrument which is full of atmosphere and the tang of the wind and sea. It is taken up on the full body of strings, with conventional but well-orchestrated "sea breezes" derived principally from harp glissandos, cymbal tremolos and rippling figures in the woodwind. A lack of heavy-handed "cinematic" devices in the scoring produces a light-hearted delicacy admirably suited to the picture.

A theme from *Flesh and Blood* called "Throughout the Years" by Charles Williams (Columbia D.B. 2836) is stolid and dull; it sounds exactly like every other theme by Charles Williams, including a coda from "Dream of Olwen".

The inappropriateness of Victor Young's music to nearly every Hollywood Historical he scores takes a good deal of getting used to; he is already represented on gramophone records in his suite "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (Brunswick 03505-07) and this material should be heard once or twice before plunging into "The Song of Delilah" on Parlophone R.3361. Mr. Young's blend of modern harmonies and a slinky Hedy Lamarr in the Samson story must be seen as a complete unit, absorbed uncritically and then, suddenly, it all seems right.

JOHN HUNTLEY

CORRESPONDENCE

THE BIG MONEY

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Dear Sir,

I read with interest your leading article "The Big Money" in February's SIGHT AND SOUND and note that you wonder what profits (if any) such a film as *Intruder in the Dust* may have made.

I am not in the film business but my endeavours to see this film in the Manchester district may give some indication as to its availability elsewhere. So far as I am aware it was not to be seen at any cinema in the centre of Manchester and it has never been screened in my own town, which possesses seven cinemas. I had more or less given up hope of seeing it until a fortnight ago when I discovered it was showing (as second feature) in an old-fashioned cinema in a Salford suburb. I went along to see it (feeling that the opportunity would not occur again!) and can only state that the leading film was a routine thriller, the programme was for three days only—with no publicity at all for *Intruder in the Dust*—and the attendance on the night I was present was very poor indeed.

I am not suggesting that *Intruder in the Dust* could ever have had a wide appeal with the best publicity but I do not see how it can have avoided losing money when it was practically boycotted by the exhibitors in the Manchester district and was not to be seen except as second feature in a side-street suburban cinema. It must undoubtedly have been a box-office failure but I do not see how one could possibly gauge its appeal from the financial returns when exhibitors have placed so many difficulties in the way of it even being seen at all.

I might add that *The Dividing Line* was almost as hard to see—no showing in either Manchester or Bury, only at a small suburban cinema—in this case, however, as the leading film and not as second feature!

Yours faithfully,
S. WRIGLEY,
144 Heywood Street, Bury.

THRILLER WRITING

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Dear Sir,

As a great fan of thrillers I congratulate Penelope Houston's adept treatment of the subject in her "scripting" columns in your March issue.

I should like to add on my part that scriptwriters are well-advised to avoid an anti-climax at the end of the picture. One of the most dangerous such pitfalls is the instance of an elaborately constructed plot, which is at the end much too easily resolved, as in *The Franchise Affair*, to name only one of many.

The most effective way of ending a thriller is, obviously, a surprise, which must, though, of course, unexpected, yet appear logical in retrospect. Perhaps *The Big Clock* met these requirements.

Naturally, there are many otherwise excellent stories, which cannot be outfitted with a surprising final scene. In those, the gradually created tension should be dissolved with the same graduality, that is, they should end with a slide instead of a flop. *The Third Man* and *The Clouded Yellow* come nearest to this idea among the films I can recall.

The importance of the ending of films cannot be too much emphasised. The average picturegoer is a most ungrateful fellow, who easily forgets eighty minutes of well-enjoyed suspense, if the last few minutes leave him with dissatisfaction.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE A. FLORIS,
How Green, Hever, Kent.

COMPETITION

Competition No. 13. The film of *The Forsyte Saga* was released, for box-office reasons, as *That Forsyte Woman* in America. Competitors are asked to provide commercial titles for similar exploitation of three of these films: *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Tempest*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Madame Bovary*, *Emma*, *Cranford*, *Howards End*. Usual prizes: closing date, May 29.

Report on No. 11. Reviews by famous writers of films made from their own works. To judge from the small entry, most readers considered that the writers would be stunned into silence. However, "Madame Merle's" pastiche of Henry James inspecting *The Heiress* and John Wilcox's Ernest Hemingway on *The Breaking Point* have the authentic touch. Honourable mention to Anthony Tighe for Kipling's new version of "If", inspired by the film of *Kim*.

Henry James visits *The Heiress*

One might not have supposed the quiet and increasingly melancholic gentleman who had, without drawing any attention to himself, and without any obvious expression of apprehension or expectation, smuggled himself into an orchestra stall of the building—its very facade rather quiet and melancholy, its advertisements composed of equal proportions of vulgarity, irrelevance and fatigue—a few yards from the now somewhat drab gaiety of Piccadilly Circus, bearing the unexpected title of *Plaza*: one might not have supposed, I say, this quiet gentleman to be the author of a brief novel from which a filmed play, shown to the public four times each day, was openly derived.

But since it was, it is time to abandon this slightly indirect method of ingress, and confess that on this dull afternoon it was I who ventured into the unyielding *Plaza*—at the invitation of the management who, on learning from a mutual friend that I was temporarily in London (en route to Venice) had offered me a single ticket for the Monday matinee—to see what has been so charmingly described as an adaptation for the seventh art of "Washington Square". There were, I discovered, three further performances of this work on that Monday afternoon, and I remained in the comfort of my stall for the duration of these hours. The reader may suspect that personal vanity played no small part in this, at first, unseemly preoccupation, but I hasten to point out that the length of time for which I reclined in the orchestra stall of the, on reflection, increasingly sympathetic *Plaza*, was due in part to the bewilderment that assailed me in the face of the new medium of the cinema. For the first two performances of my film, I found it too quick, too breathless in its movements, too overcrowded with violent incidents, and too sparse, above all, in its dialogue, for me to remain, as it were, *au courant* with the development of the story and the motives of its personages. I managed to recognise my Catherine Sloper, my Doctor Sloper, my Morris Townsend, but I could not appreciate the great artistic qualities of the entire representation until the filmed play had begun its third, inexorable, but by no means unwelcome, unwinding. Then, I became particularly aware, the presentation of Morris Townsend, was an accomplishment of most remarkable and appropriate skill. The other parts of the film I found almost as good: the décors sumptuously exact, the costumes perfectly harmonised, and all rendered with, one would have thought, impossible consistency by the innumerable cameras. I left the delightful *Plaza* with a certain reluctance, momentarily bewildered to discover myself in a corridor strewn with what appeared to be the shells of very small nuts, but the delicate refrain of "Plaisir d'Amour" recurring most agreeably in my mind.

("Madame Merle". First prize, 25/-)

Hemingway on *The Breaking Point*

When I wrote this book I was going fifteen rounds with Mr. Stendhal. I wasn't doing too well in there either. Perhaps I could take Mr. Stendhal now. Perhaps that is why this book does not seem much of a book now. There was faking in it and perhaps a little truth. The film has much faking and no truth. This Harry Morgan has two arms and no *cojones* to do the things he's supposed to do. His wife I made all woman, and now she is one who speaks with her mouth.

They tried hard in the fight on the boat, but they got the guns wrong. They always get the guns wrong. It was faked and the guns were not right. The Cuban audience liked the big fight and did not see that the guns were wrong.

Afterwards Andres, who runs the theatre, asked me, "Papa, did you like this translation of your beautiful book?"

I told him I did not like this translation. We went to the Café Florida for daiquiris without sugar. I explained to Andres about the guns.

(John Wilcox, 132, Brigstock Road, Thornton Heath.
2nd Prize, 10/6)

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